

U.S. President Clinton pledges support for Israel, peace process

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an anniversary celebration, U.S. President Bill Clinton said Monday that the United States' swift recognition of the state of Israel 50 years ago was "one of our proudest moments."

He said hopes for peace in the Middle East "must not be lost."

"This is a time of reconciliation around the world," Mr. Clinton said. "It must be a time to deepen freedom and raise up life in the Middle East."

The president accepted an honorary doctorate of philosophy from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to commemorate the anniversary. He was

the first U.S. president to receive that honor since Harry Truman.

On May 14, 1948, 11 minutes after Israel's declaration as a state, Truman signed a document that recognized the Jewish state.

"Let us in the United States say that we will stand by Israel, always four-square for its security, always together in friendship," Mr. Clinton told guests in a cavernous tent on the South Lawn.

"Jews and Arabs who have wanted nothing more than to live quiet, normal lives are still denied that simple pleasure," Mr. Clinton said. "Still, as the new century dawns, the world is filled with the promise and

hope that we can overcome ancient hatreds to build a modern peace for our children."

Pointing toward steps toward reconciliation around the world, in Guatemala, Mozambique, Bosnia and Northern Ireland, Mr. Clinton said that "long-time antagonists have left the battle ground to find common ground. They are weary of war, they long for peace for their children. They move beyond hatred to hope."

He said that the 21st century "can and must be a century of democracy, prosperity and justice and of course, of peace. But it can be only if we learn not only to respect but to honor our differences."

He said that extremists have tried to disrupt peace with bullets and bombs.

"We cannot let the extremists prevail. Israel can fulfil its full promise by drawing on the courage and vision of its founders to achieve peace with security," the president said. "Never has the opportunity been more real, and it must not be lost."

While making peace in the Middle East a high priority for his administration, Mr. Clinton has been frustrated by a lack of progress. White House press secretary Mike McCurry said that Mr. Clinton was neither encouraged nor discouraged by the long impasse. "He is realistic," Mr. McCurry said.



ISRAELI PLANES SHELL LEBANESE VILLAGE: Smoke rises Monday after Israeli shelling of the Zibqeen village following a guerrilla attack on an Israeli patrol at the edge of the Jewish state's occupation zone in south Lebanon. Five Israeli soldiers were wounded, one of them seriously, early on Monday when a bomb planted by pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrillas exploded beside a road in south Lebanon, a security source said (Reuters photo)

One demonstrator killed, four wounded in Yemen — opposition

SANAA (AP) — One person was killed and four others wounded Monday when police clashed with demonstrators in southern Yemen, an opposition figure said.

More than 2,000 people took to the streets in the city of Hadramawt to urge increased freedoms and protest price hikes and

falling living standards, said a member of the opposition Yemeni Socialist Party. He spoke on condition of anonymity.

Hundreds of security forces used live bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters, the opposition member said. Three of the wounded were policemen while a

protester was killed and another wounded.

Security officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, confirmed the demonstration was held, saying opposition parties were warned Sunday not to hold such illegal protests. But they refused to give details on the protest.

Yassin seeks Kuwait's backing against Israel

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, spiritual leader of the Palestinian group Hamas, said Monday he was seeking Kuwait's backing against Israel.

"Our hope today is that our relations with the Kuwaiti people and its leaders develop and that their support grows for us to be able to recover our rights," he told the newspaper Al Rai Al Aam.

This Gulf Arab emirate, previously a major aid donor to the Palestinians, froze relations with the PLO because of its support for Baghdad after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Sheikh Yassin, who is touring Gulf states and expected soon in Kuwait, said that his Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) opposed the Iraqi occupation and he had "no intention to visit Iraq."

Palestinian awqaf minister dies in Amman

AMMAN (AP) — Hassan Tahboub, the minister of religious affairs of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), died of a stroke Monday in a Jordanian hospital. He was 75.

Omar Khatib, a representative of the PNA in Jordan, said Tahboub was admitted to an Amman hospital a month ago after suffering a heart attack and "his health deteriorated since, until he had a fatal stroke early Monday morning."

Tahboub's body, wrapped in white shroud, later was carried on a stretcher from the hospital and put atop a station wagon. Tahboub's Jordanian counterpart, Abdul Salam Abbad, escorted the car, which was decorated with flowers.

Burial at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest shrine, was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Palestinian officials in Jerusalem said.

Tahboub, who was born in Jerusalem, worked in the city's finance department during the British mandate. When the city was under Jordanian control, he served as director of the Waqf, or Islamic endowment. In the early 1960s, he was elected to the Higher Islamic Committee, which oversaw Muslim affairs.

After Israel captured Arab east Jerusalem in the 1967 war, Tahboub became director general of the Waqf in the West Bank. He also established the Waqf Council in Jerusalem, a charitable organization.

In 1990, he became advisor to the Jordanian Waqf minister. After the creation of the PNA in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1994, he was named by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to head the religious affairs ministry.

Tahboub is survived by his wife, five sons and three daughters.

Syrian president to make rare official visit to France

PARIS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Assad is expected to pay an official visit to France in July, his first trip here in 22 years, reliable sources said Monday.

The visit, at the invitation of President Jacques Chirac, marks a further step in the rapprochement between Syria and France, after bilateral relations soured during the conflict in Lebanon of the 1980s.

The 70-year-old Syrian leader, who rarely travels to the West, last came to France in 1976 and is expected in the second half of July. The last French presidential visit to Syria was by President Chirac in October 1990.

President Assad's visit will come at a time when France is trying to play a role in the Middle East, where the peace process is frozen and attempts to end Israel's occupation of

southern Lebanon are also at a dead-end.

France has historic ties with Lebanon, where Syria is the main power-broker, maintaining some 30,000 troops deployed there.

The French president hopes that, by rebuilding confidence between Damascus and Paris, France can begin to reassess influence in the Middle East where the United States currently holds sway.

Iraq continues political executions — dissidents

CAIRO (AP) — Iraq has transferred 3,800 detainees to underground dungeons at a prison outside Baghdad and continues to execute political prisoners, an Iraqi opposition group charged Monday.

The Iraqi Communist Party also said in a statement that Iraq would try to divert attention from its poor treatment of prisoners by releasing "a large number of ordinary prisoners" to mark Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's birthday celebrations on Tuesday.

The statement was faxed to The Associated Press in Cairo.

The group said that its sources inside Iraq determined that 3,800 detainees had been moved in February to underground dungeons in the Abu Ghraib prison west of

Baghdad. The detainees were said to be in "a very bad state," the group said.

It also alleged that "Saddam's regime has carried out further executions of political prisoners during recent weeks." It did not say how many were believed killed.

Iraqi dissident groups say that Iraq began a campaign of executions late last year. In March, the London-headquartered Iraqi Communist Party charged that some 200 dissidents were moved from detention centres to Abu Ghraib prison in preparation for execution.

The detainees were said to be residents of Iraq's southern provinces, which are mainly populated by Shiite Muslims. In its latest statement, the

group quoted Iraq's labour minister, Abdul Aziz Muhammad Saleh Al Sayegh, as telling a Baghdad newspaper last month that "the number of prisoners is five times more than the actual capacity of prisons." The group said it was Iraq's first public admission of prison overcrowding.

Earlier this month, a U.N. human rights official said that a purge of Iraqi prisons and other summary executions may have accounted for some 1,500 deaths in the country last year.

In a report presented to the annual meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, former Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoep said that he had received "numerous allegations" of human rights abuses by Mr. Hussein's government.

The numbers of executions — reportedly by shooting, hanging or electrocution — were said to have increased after Mr. Hussein's younger son, Qusai, visited Abu Ghraib in November. Mr. van der Stoep said, Qusai is in charge of Iraq's security apparatus.

Mr. van der Stoep later said in a news conference that it was unlikely that the human rights situation in Iraq would change even if the U.N. sanctions were dropped because Mr. Hussein's regime "would only feel secure by maintaining its present policy of oppression." Iraqi officials denied the charges, characterising them as attempts by the West to mobilise public opinion against the government.

Egyptian-Sudanese talks on property fail — paper

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian negotiations aimed at recovering properties confiscated by Sudan have failed, the Al Hayat newspaper reported Monday.

The London-based daily said 10 days of talks failed to produce results when it became apparent that Sudan was willing to return only some of the 33 schools, 16 guest houses and buildings of the Cairo University campus to Egyptian control.

Egypt's 16-member negotiating team returned to Cairo on Monday. None spoke with reporters. Officials at the Foreign Ministry were not available for comment on Monday, a holiday marking the start of the Islamic new year.

In March, Sudan's president, Lt. Gen. Omar Al Bashir, announced that

Sudan would return to Egypt all the buildings in Sudan that were confiscated starting in 1994.

The move was seen as a goodwill gesture amid efforts to improve relations between the two countries. Egypt contends it owns the properties, but Sudan says Egypt had rights to them under long-term leases that have expired.

Al Hayat did not say why Sudan apparently balked at returning all the properties. Members of the Egyptian delegation told Al Hayat that the failure of the talks meant that an expected visit by President Bashir to Cairo would now be put off.

They said Cairo was ready for further negotiations "when Khartoum was ready to return the Egyptian properties." The paper did not give their names.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli border guards sentenced for beating Palestinians

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Three Israeli border guards were sentenced to prison terms Monday by a Jerusalem court for severely beating two Palestinians and dragging one of them from the back of a jeep, judicial sources said. The judge said the three had shown an "absence of sense and morality" and "dishonoured Israel's border guards," before handing them prison terms of a year, 15 months and 18 months, the sources said.

Saudi lawyer expects British nurses freed soon

DUBAI (R) — The Saudi lawyer for two British nurses, who were jailed in the kingdom for allegedly murdering a colleague, said on Monday he expected their release to take place soon. "We all expect a release to take place in the very near future," lawyer Salah Al Hejailan told Reuters by telephone from Riyadh. He did not give any timing for the anticipated release. "The good news is that... the situation is being very favourably considered" by King Fahd, he said.

Court upholds Tunisian rights activist's sentence

TUNIS (R) — A Tunis appeal court has upheld a three-year sentence on Tunisian rights activist Khemais Kila, defence lawyers said on Monday. Mr. Kila, vice president of the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights, had appealed against the sentence handed down by a criminal court in February for "outrage to the public order," "spreading false information" and "inciting citizens to violate the country's laws." He was arrested last September 29 after he issued a communiqué to protest against his firing in 1996 from a job at a state-owned company and confiscation of his passport because of what he said was his rights activism.

Private Morocco delegation goes to Iraq via Syria

DAMASCUS (R) — A delegation of Moroccan lawyers, engineers and activist group members left Damascus for Baghdad by road on Monday on a solidarity visit, the first by an Arab delegation through Syria. Akdeem Mohammad, member of the Rabat Bar Association, told Reuters the 113-member delegation had arrived in Damascus aboard a private Syrian aircraft early on Monday. "We are bringing with us symbolic aid of medicines and foodstuffs to help the Iraqi people counter U.N. sanctions," Mr. Mohammad said.

Body of Iraqi prisoner repatriated after death in Kuwait

BAGHDAD (AP) — The body of an Iraqi man, jailed in Kuwait for conviction in a plot to assassinate former U.S. President George Bush, was repatriated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported. INA said in a dispatch late Sunday that the body of Ali Khudair Baddai, 78, was brought to his family in the southern city of Basra for burial in March. The agency gave no reason for the delay in reporting the repatriation. Baddai had served a four-year jail sentence for conviction in the Bush case. He was undergoing treatment for lung cancer and died in a Kuwaiti hospital.

Syria conveyed Egypt's 'interest' to mend ties with Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Syrian officials conveyed Egypt's "interest" in improving relations with Iran during a visit here this weekend, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said Monday. "It is no special initiative. What our Syrian friends told us is Egyptian officials' interest in boosting relations with Iran," Mr. Kharazi told a press conference. He said Tehran too was "in principle interested in cooperating with Cairo," but called for "practical steps to remove existing obstacles."

Former Iranian PM's granddaughter killed

TEHRAN (AFP) — Unidentified assailants have strangled to death the daughter of former Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosadeq, who was toppled in a US-backed coup in 1953, the official IRNA news agency reported Monday. Masumeh Mosadeq, 49, was killed in her home in the Navaran district of northern Tehran on Thursday after the attackers broke into the house through a back window, it said. Ms. Mosadeq was a permanent resident of the United States and she intended to sell her house and join her husband there. A caretaker discovered the body the next day and informed the police, who are still investigating, said IRNA.

Libyan delegation in Bonn for talks on economic cooperation

BONN (AP) — An official four-man delegation from Libya arrived Monday for talks with members of parliament on economic cooperation and human rights issues in the Mediterranean region. The delegation, led by Libya's assistant secretary-general of the General People's Congress, Abdel Hamid Al Sayd Al Zanaty, was invited by the German parliament. Mr. Zanaty is to hold three days of meetings in Bonn, including with Deputy Foreign Minister Helmut Schaefer and politicians from Germany's governing coalition.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Children's Programme — Cinderella
16:00Music Circus
17:00Heidi (Pt. II)
18:00Les Cœurs Brûlés
19:00Le Journal
19:15Doc. — Fractales
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — "Step By Step"
20:00Favourite Films
20:30Encounter
21:10 Doc. — The Making of Rhodes
22:00News in English
22:30Feature Film
00:30End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:24Fajr
05:49(Sunrise) Duha
12:33Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:18Maghreb
20:42Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifheh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.

4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifheh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679

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Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifheh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Fine weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising significantly and winds westerly moderate becoming easterly moderate in the afternoon. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman10/23
Aqaba19/30
Deserts07/25
Jordan Valley15/29

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 30, Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 52 per cent, Aqaba 58 per cent

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Bassam Karadseh759200
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi894788
Dr. Salma Daboubi776751
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad 846070
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy4637055
Al Salam pharmacy4636730

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 561111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192 461111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information directory assistance121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4632101

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic Abdi5666137
Hussain Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 858585
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Alshah Maternity464241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman,4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Jaffar, Al-Muhajreen 7770113
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka391611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602340/50
Arnal Hospital5674155

FOR THE TRAVELLER

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Damascus (RJ)
07:45Sanaa (RJ)
08:15Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:20Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:50Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:45Beirut (RJ)
08:50Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
13:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:00Paris (RJ)
13:15Cairo (RJ)
14:00Frankfurt, London (RJ)
21:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:40Damascus (RJ)
22:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
02:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Home

Queen, German plans for intern

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor, who met with the president of the German United World Colleges (UWC) National Committee, Christian Hodeige, in Baden to discuss plans for the establishment of a UWC of the Middle East in Jordan, according to a press release Monday.

Queen Noor, who is the president of the UWC, said the Jordanian National Committee is currently in the process of selecting several sites in Amman, which she said would be an ideal location for the college due to its natural geographical location.

Mr. Hodeige affirmed that the German National Committee fully supports the establishment of a UWC in Jordan, and will work on securing financial aid from Germany.

WORKSHOP ON URBAN HOUSING

Urban Development Corporation, up on urban housing. The workshop for Human Settlements in Urban Settlements (Habitat) and

Jordanian in

open in G

RUHAN (Petra) — The Urban Trade Association announced Monday it is organising an annual fair in Gaza on 2 to orient the Palestinian public on the King's roads.

According to a JTA statement, Palestinian Minister of Trade and Industry Maher Masri will open the fair in the presence of the Jordanian Ambassador to the self-rule, Ziyad Majali, and a large audience of Palestinian.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King offers Istiklal Medal to Chilean ambassador

RUHAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday conferred the Istiklal Independence Medal of the Kingdom on Chilean Ambassador Jorge Leguizamón at the start of his four-day duty. Acting Foreign Minister Samim

Report of King's conferring of Istiklal Medal to Chilean Ambassador

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday conferred the Istiklal Independence Medal of the Kingdom on Chilean Ambassador Jorge Leguizamón at the start of his four-day duty. Acting Foreign Minister Samim

what's going on

CONCERT
To be held by the students of the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday, April 29, at 7:30 p.m.

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK
The film "Live Through It" by the Royal Cultural Centre will be shown on Wednesday, April 29, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. respectively.

EXHIBITION
The exhibition "The Making of a Nation" will be held at the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday, April 29, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. respectively.

Queen, German committee discuss plans for international college in Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Sunday met with the president of the German United World Colleges (UWC) National Committee, Christian Hodeige, in Baden-Baden to discuss plans for the establishment of a "UWC of the Middle East" in Jordan, according to a press release Monday.

Queen Noor, who is the president of the UWC, said the Jordanian National Committee is currently considering several sites in Amman, which she said would be an ideal location for the college due to its central geographical location.

Mr. Hodeige affirmed that the "German National Committee fully supports the establishment of a UWC in Jordan" and will work on securing funds for the college from German educational institutions such as the German Research Association, which already finances several educational and environmental projects in the Middle East, the statement said.

The chair of the UWC Board, Mark Hoffman, noted that the board will issue a resolution next Monday stating their "endorsement of a UWC in the Middle East," their "support for the Jordanian National Committee's efforts in identifying a site" and their intention to form a multi-national board for the proposed college.

Founded in 1962, the UWC is an equal opportunity international secondary education programme designed to foster cross-cultural understanding and global peace. The UWCs, which select students from

EC, Jordan identify sectors for 1998-1999 financing

AMMAN (J.T.) — In the context of ongoing reforms and the establishment of a European Union (EU)-Jordan free trade area under the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, Jordan has identified industrial modernisation and environmental policy as priority sectors eligible for EU financing for the coming two years, the Delegation of the European Commission (EC) in Jordan said in a statement on Monday.

To this effect, the statement added, a memorandum of understanding for financial and technical cooperation was signed Saturday by Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and the head of the EC Delegation to Jordan, Yves Gazzio.

Initiatives to be launched by Jordan in the field of industrial modernisation and development of the private sector will encompass projects related to the improvement of industrial competitiveness and the business environment, reinforcement of industrial groupings, business upgrading, as well as technical education, vocational training and creation/financing of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the productive sectors, the statement said.

It added that in the field of environment, the EC will provide interest subsidies in support of European Investment Bank actions which have an environmental impact in the priority sector of water and other sectors.

Under the new memorandum, both sides will mutually agree on the actions and projects the EC will finance, the statement concluded.

JPA elections postponed until next month

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Pharmacists Association (JPA) has decided to convene a general assembly meeting on May 29 to elect a committee to supervise elections for the association's 1998-2000 presidency and board of directors on June 12.

The decision was unanimously adopted by the JPA board, which met under incumbent President Abdul Rahman Issa.

Dr. Issa earlier this month announced that the elections would be held on May 29, after a High Court decision in March annulled last year's election results.

Four JPA members who had run in the elections but failed to secure seats challenged the legality of the balloting on the grounds that several members voted without having paid their dues. In its ruling, the court found that 177 members had paid dues with postdated cheques and another 52 submitted cheques that later bounced.

The 10-member council elected last year was heavily dominated by Islamists, who held eight seats, but some pharmacists said the court decision would have little bearing on the political character of the board after the new elections.

Dr. Issa said that according to the new JPA law, there must be two separate meetings of the general assembly: one to elect the supervisory committee and another to hold the actual elections. The provisions of the previous law stipulated that the two meetings were to be held on the same day.

According to Dr. Issa, JPA members may pay their dues in cash until April 29; otherwise they will not be allowed to take part in the elections.

Jordanian-Danish conference on investment prospects opens today in Copenhagen

AMMAN (J.T.) — Coinciding with His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Denmark, the Jordan Businessmen Association (JBA) today is opening an economic conference in Copenhagen entitled: "Investment prospects between Jordan and Denmark."

Taking part in the conference are Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf.

Hamdi Tabbaz, JBA chairperson, will lead the association's delegation of leading Jordanian businesspersons and representatives of the economic sector.

The conference will discuss ways to promote economic cooperation between Denmark and Jordan, overcome obstacles in the path of investment, and areas for joint investment projects.

The JBA said the 185 participants at the conference will discuss prospects for bilateral economic cooperation in light of the Jordanian-European Association agreement, which will go into effect next year.

During the conference, Jordanian and Danish businesspersons will sign an agreement on a business council to promote mutual economic cooperation and joint investment schemes as well as organise reciprocal visits by delegations from the two countries.

On the sidelines of the conference Jordan will organise a tourism exhibition to orient the Danish public on the Kingdom's attractions and prime areas for investment.

Committee submits memoranda to UNRWA on Palestinian refugee housing

AMMAN (J.T.) — A committee for the defence of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland has submitted two memoranda concerning refugee housing and services in Jordan to the director of operations at the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Jordan, Gunter Lofberg.

Ulayyan Ulayyan, information spokesperson for the committee, told the Jordan Times that one of the memoranda concerned the recent demolition of refugee housing units at Al Hussein Camp in Amman as well as services to the camp residents. The other dealt with a report submitted to the U.N. General Assembly by UNRWA General Commissioner Peter Hansen on the financial situation of the agency, he added.

Mr. Ulayyan said the committee expressed dismay at the demolitions at the camp, which it considers as part of a general policy of settling the refugees permanently in the Kingdom.

He said the refugees whose homes were removed for the purpose of opening a ring road in Amman did not receive enough compensation to buy new homes, nor were they given other homes within the same camp.

The committee, which was formed by the Jordanian opposition political parties, demanded that the refugees be settled within the perimeter of the same camp and that the agency not reduce its services to camp residents under the pretext of a deficit in its budget, according to Mr. Ulayyan.

According to the committee, UNRWA has reduced social, educational and health services to the refugees in its fields of operations by 29 per cent over the past four years. It claimed that the agency was trying to cover its deficit by reducing services and facilitating the permanent settlement of refugees in Arab countries by allowing the removal of the camps.

The memoranda denounced all attempts to settle the refugees in the Arab World and reiterated its support for U.N. resolutions 194 and 237, which provide for the return of refugees and displaced Palestinians to their homeland.

The committee demanded that UNRWA take measures to alleviate the economic and social suffering of the refugees and refrain from taking steps that would cause the refugees to leave the camps, which it said stand out as a reminder to the world of the Palestinian people's plight.



WORKSHOP ON URBAN HOUSING OPENS: The director of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, Yusef Hiyasat, Monday opens a training workshop on urban housing. The workshop was organised by the Regional Training Centre for Human Settlements in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the Arab League (Petra photo)

Jordanian industrial fair to open in Gaza next month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Trade Association (JTA) announced Monday that it is organising an industrial fair in Gaza on May 7 to orient the Palestinian public on the Kingdom's goods.

According to a JTA statement, Palestinian Minister of Trade and Economy Maher Masri will open the fair in the presence of the Jordanian ambassador to the self-rule areas, Ziyad Majali, and a large audience of Palestinian officials.

The JTA paid tribute to official and private organisations in Jordan and Palestine for their efforts to ensure the fair's success. The Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) has through its offices in Gaza and Ramallah exerted special efforts to prepare for the six-day fair, it added.

The statement noted that the fair will display Jordanian electric and telephone cables and wires, paint, chemical detergents, perfumes, cosmetics, plastic bags, computer components, foodstuffs, white cement, fertilisers, home and electrical appliances, drip irrigation systems, fabrics and ready-made garments, among other items.

Last year, Jordan exported JD10.7 million worth of products to the Palestinian self-rule areas and imported JD21.7 million worth of Palestinian goods.

One man play first at new cultural venue

By Jumana Abu-Hannoud
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In an attempt to create a new cultural venue for theatre in Amman, the InterContinental Hotel presented the one man play "A Meeting of Minds" by Michael Luntz last week.

"A Meeting of Minds" is one of the many plays performed as part of the David Doloboy tours that started in the Gulf in 1990, said Mr. Luntz.

"It is a play with music based on the composer Rachmaninov. It takes place in the study of Doctor Dahl, a practising hypnotist who addresses Mr. Rachmaninov's past in order to help him overcome his confusion and devastation, especially after the disastrous reviews of his first symphony," Mr. Luntz said.

It shows how his loss of confidence was due not only to the reviews, but to a culmination of events that were buried in his subconscious. Because Dr. Dahl believes that the past is a key to the future and that one must go into the mind of the artist to understand his work, he



Education Minister Mohammad Hamdan addresses the opening session of the conference (Petra photo)

JEA opens meeting on electrical engineering

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) Monday opened its third international conference on electrical engineering in conjunction with the Jordanian chapter of the British Society of Electrical Engineering.

The three-day meeting, which is being held at the Jerusalem Hotel, will review 88 research papers submitted by participants from Jordan and eight Arab countries, in addition to Britain, Italy, Australia and Bulgaria, according to Daifallah Dalabee, head of the conference's preparatory committee.

Three lecturers are to address the participants at the conference, which aims at facilitating the exchange of expertise among participants in modern trends in the electric and electronic fields, said Dr. Dalabee.

In an address opening the meeting, Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Hamdan outlined the ministry's plans to promote science and technology and their applications to the Kingdom's development projects in Jordanian institutions of higher learning.

JEA President Hosni Abu Gheida reviewed the association's achievements in the past year and training courses offered to engineers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King confers Istiklal Medal upon Chilean ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday conferred the Istiklal (Independence) Medal of the First Order upon Chilean Ambassador Jorge Iglesias at the end of his tour of duty. Acting Foreign Minister Sammi

Gammoh presented the medal to Mr. Iglesias on behalf of the King.

Regent offers condolences to Arafat over Tahboub's death

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal, the Regent, Monday sent

a letter of condolence to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat over the death of Sheikh Hassan Tahboub, Palestinian awqaf minister. The Regent deputised Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbad to escort the body of Tahboub to the King Hussein Bridge. Dr. Abbad condoled Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khaib on the death of Sheikh Tahboub.

Cement factory organises familiarisation trip

FUHEIS (Petra) — The Jordan Cement Factories Company Monday organised a field trip to its factories to acquaint participants with the new JD35 million additions. The chairman of the company's board of directors, Hamdi Tabbaz, briefed the participants on the company's new measures to protect the environment.

what's going on

CONCERT

* Piano recital by the students of Lina Evan at the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday, April 29, at 6:00 p.m.

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK

* Finnish film "Dog Thieves" and Danish film "Pelle the Conqueror" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Tuesday, April 28, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively.

* Norwegian film "Whitbear King Valen" and Icelandic film "Benjamin Dove" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday, April 29, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively.

FILM

* "Highlander" at the British Council, Jabel Amman at 10:00 p.m. Also showing children's film "The Slow Morris" — Making Friends on Wednesday, April 29 at 5:00 p.m. respectively.

* German film "Summer in the City" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabel Amman, on Wednesday, April 29, at 7:00 p.m.

LECTURES

* "Cansino-Assens, the Teacher of Borgs" (in Spanish) by Javier Garcia at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman on Wednesday, April 29, at 6:00 p.m.

* Lecture by Lebanese writer Elias Khoury about his latest novel "The Gate of the Sun" at Darat Al Fann, Jabel Weibdeh, at 7:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Ecuadorian artist Olmedo Quimbina at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman, until May 12.

* Paintings by Najil Al Sanjari at Harunirabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 3.

* Works by Yassin Al Mohamadawi at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until May 7.

Centre plans to begin offering controversial obesity treatment next month

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan plans to launch a centre in May to help patients facing morbid obesity through a controversial laparoscopic gastric banding process to enable them to lose weight without resorting to drastic surgery.

Local doctors will perform "video surgery" by using a laparoscope to wrap a silicon band around the upper part of the stomach. The technique can reduce the volume of the stomach by four-fifths by using a band inserted through tiny holes into the abdominal wall.

However, doctors remain divided on the efficiency of gastric banding and on possible repercussions.

"This centre, the first in the region, will have the specific task of treating obese and morbidly obese people who are quite numerous here, though not as numerous as in the Gulf or in the United States," Khalid Zayadin, a pioneer in laparoscopic surgery in Jordan, said

in a recent interview.

This type of surgery does not involve making a large incision that would take a long time to heal and cause pain to a morbidly obese person, defined as anyone who is at least twice his/her ideal body weight.

Such patients have a massive accumulation of fat around the liver and abdomen, which causes health many problems such as heart disease, diabetes and infertility.

Many resort to drastic measures to lose weight, such as wiring their jaws to allow only small portions of liquidated food to pass through the mouth. Others undergo acupuncture, crash dieting or liposuction.

"All that usually fails," claimed Dr. Zayadin, a German-educated surgeon. He said that liposuction, which many resort to as a means of losing weight, was not a means for body reshaping and not for the treatment of obesity.

"It does not remove large masses of fat embedded deep inside the body of a morbidly obese person," he said.

Renowned plastic surgeon Gaith Shubeilat said one method for the treatment of morbid obesity does not work on its own as weight loss is accompanied by a looseness in the skin.

"No amount of exercise or dieting can change one's genetic make-up. If a woman or a man has large thighs or buttocks, then nothing except plastic surgery will change the shape," he told the Jordan Times.

Dr. Shubeilat, citing an example, said a woman in her 30s and weighing 184 kilograms sought his help after undergoing two tummy tucks, three liposuctions and even gastric banding in the United States.

After gastric banding, she had lost 40 kilograms. But her skin was loose and her body had no shape. "You need plastic surgery to reshape the body after it has lost so much fat," Dr. Shubeilat said.

Doctors said it takes up to three years to achieve the desired results under gastric banding as a patient can lose up

to ten kilograms a month, supported by nutritionists and sometimes a psychiatrist.

Though "laparoscopic gastric banding is the last resort in morbid obesity," Dr. Zayadin stated, that the process needs full cooperation from the patient and a will to lose weight.

As for side effects, Dr. Zayadin said complications could happen in any procedure, but if one compared the negative effect of obesity on the patient's health, then the risk-benefit ratio tilts in favour of this type of surgery.

"The effect of gastric banding is like having a belt tied around your waist. The band is tightened to reduce the volume of the stomach and this prohibits the intake of large quantities of food," Dr. Zayadin said.

He explained that the silicon band is sutured to the upper part of the stomach and is adjustable. If a patient is losing too much or too little weight, the band is loosened or tightened.

"This procedure does not allow the

patient to eat more than a limited quantity of food. If the patient eats more than the pouch will accommodate, then he or she will vomit."

However, internist Junaid Mahmood was pessimistic.

"There have been so many surgical procedures in the treatment of morbid obesity. Inserting a balloon in the stomach, bypassing the small bowel... these procedures have resulted in very bad complications."

Conventional surgery has been used for the past decade to treat morbid obesity.

But according to Dr. Zayadin, though "initial results are good, high complication rates have been recorded at later stages."

However, he believes that laparoscopic surgery, used in Belgium for the past three years, offers the solution for the morbidly obese.

In 1991, Jordan was among the first Arab countries to use laparoscopic surgery to perform appendectomies and remove particular types of hernias,

EU steps up pressure on Milosevic over Kosovo crisis

LUXEMBOURG (AFP) — The European Union Monday stepped up the pressure on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to accept international mediation to end a crisis in Kosovo that has sparked fears a new war in the Balkans may be imminent.

"Belgrade had better take note — the outside world is not going to let this one go," British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said at a meeting with his EU counterparts.

"The EU is going to make sure ethnic confrontation is not going to be allowed to continue in any part of Europe."

Mr. Cook's comments followed fresh violent incidents in Kosovo over the weekend that he described as a "troubling escalation" of the conflict between the Belgrade authorities and separatists in the mainly ethnic Albanian province.

More than 100 ethnic Albanians and eight policemen have been killed in Kosovo since late February in clashes that began when Serbian security forces launched a crackdown on separatist activity in the southern Serbian province.

The onslaught has led to increased demands from the ethnic-Albanian population for independence but a main objective of the Kosovo people remains restoration of the autonomy the province enjoyed before the break-up of the old Yugoslavia.

The EU and the United States have made it clear they will not support independence for the province because of fears this would further destabilise the region.

Kosovo's autonomy status was repealed by Mr. Milosevic in 1989. Belgrade has since ruled the province through virtual martial law.

Hans Van den Broek, the European Commissioner in charge of relations with the Balkans, described as "completely predictable and absolutely unsatisfactory" the result of a referendum announced by Belgrade last week in which 95 per cent of voters in Serbia rejected international mediation.

He warned that the latest incidents would make EU governments "inclined" to step up the pressure further on Belgrade to open talks with the Albanian community, which boycotted the referendum.

"There must be international involvement in these negotiations if they are to get anywhere," he said.

Mr. Cook however played down any moves to strengthen

international sanctions agreed by the six-nation international "Contact Group" last month.

The sanctions include an embargo on arms and munitions, restrictions on investment and a visa-ban on Yugoslav ministers.

EU ministers might hold preliminary talks on a possible extension of the package of measures but "any next step will first of all have to go through the contact group," Mr. Cook said.

The group, made up of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the United States and Russia, is due to hold talks on the Kosovo crisis in Rome Wednesday.

Mr. Cook called on the Belgrade authorities to act urgently to stabilise the current situation by withdrawing the Serbian special police to barracks, ending the use of heavy weapons against civilians and by starting "meaningful talks about an enhanced status for Kosovo."



Saxony-Anhalt Premier and Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate Reinhard Hoepfner (right) and his wife Renate carry flowers during an election party to celebrate the results of the state elections (Reuters photo)

German SPD in talks after far-right surge

MAGDEBURG. Germany (R) — Germany's Social Democrats were looking for a coalition partner Monday in a key eastern state where voters swung against Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats in favour of the far-right.

Kohl's CDU saw its share of the vote in Sunday's Saxony-Anhalt election plunge to 22 per cent, a fall of nearly 12.5 points since the last state election in 1994.

Just five months before September's federal election, the anti-immigrant German People's Union (DVU) shot from nowhere to win 12.9 per cent, official provisional results showed.

Political commentators saw the result as a major blow to Mr. Kohl's effort to be re-elected to a record fifth term in September.

"The result is a debacle for Kohl, a disaster," said ZDF Television's Editor in Chief Klaus Bresser, adding that the DVU's result was an "alarm signal" for democratic parties.

"The East is voting Kohl out of office," said Gerhard Schroeder, the Chancellor's Social Democrat (SPD) challenger.

The SPD's Reinhard Hoepfner, re-elected as state premier in Saxony-Anhalt, said he was ready to negotiate with Kohl's CDU as possible coalition partners in the region.

"This state needs a strong government, and one which is capable of winning back the people who were disappointed by the democratic parties," Mr. Hoepfner told ARD Television.

The centre-left SPD is in opposition to Mr. Kohl's conservative CDU nationally.

The DVU's result was the best post-World War II showing for any far-right party in Germany. It was widely interpreted as an expression of youth frustration over the state's unemployment rate of 25 per cent, the highest in Germany.

The SPD gained 35.9 per cent, up from 34.0 per cent at

the last state election in 1994. An initial projection had given it up to 37 per cent.

Mr. Hoepfner said it was too early to discuss possible government arrangements but ruled out a formal coalition with the reform communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the third strongest party in the region with 20 per cent.

"There will be no coalition with the PDS," Mr. Hoepfner said.

Saxony-Anhalt is currently ruled by a minority coalition government of the SPD and ecologist Greens. They rely on the informal support of the PDS for a parliamentary majority.

CDU Saxony-Anhalt leader Christoph Bergner said his party would "react positively" if invited to coalition negotiations with the SPD.

Saxony-Anhalt, a region west of Berlin with a population of three million, is one of six states created out of the former Communist East Germany after unification with West Germany eight

years ago.

Mr. Kohl, once hailed as the "chancellor of unity" in the East, was jeered at campaign rallies in Saxony-Anhalt last week as easterners' frustration with unfulfilled government promises has soared in tandem with unemployment levels.

"We used to get a nice tailwind from Bonn," said Mr. Bergner. "But this time we were running into a headwind."

Rightists and neo-Nazis have found fertile ground in the East where unemployment and anti-foreigner sentiment have risen amid the social upheaval that followed reunification.

The DVU campaigned on a staunchly nationalist platform, blaming foreigners for taking German jobs.

The party, run by millionaire Bavarian publisher Gerhard Frey, blanketed the state with posters promising to take a tougher stance on "foreign criminals" and to find "jobs for Germans."

3 ethnic Albanians killed, four injured in clashes with the army

PRISTINA. Yugoslavia (AFP) — Three ethnic Albanians were killed and four wounded in clashes with a Yugoslav army unit guarding the border between Albania and Kosovo province early Monday, the Serbian Media Centre said.

Meanwhile sources close to the Serbian police said that assaults with automatic weapons and grenade launchers attacked a police station in southwest Kosovo, injuring two officers, one seriously, early Monday.

The attackers, driving a truck and a car, opened fire with automatic weapons and grenade launchers. The police shot back, the sources said.

In the other incident, the army said one of its units was attacked by a group of ethnic Albanians west of the town of Decani, around 3 a.m. (0100 GMT) Monday. Soldiers returned fire, the centre said.

Quoting the army corps in the Kosovo capital Pristina, it

added that a considerable "amount of arms and military equipment were found in the region, and several shelters, bunkers and dugouts, built by Albanian extremists."

The centre mentioned no casualties among the soldiers. It added that military units continued to search the bordering region.

Meanwhile, the main Albanian party in the province, the Kosovo Democratic League (LDK), said that the Yugoslav army used artillery to attack two Albanian villages in the west of the province overnight Monday.

The LDK said that the villages of Stergun and Hutaj near Decani, about ten kilometres from the border with Albania, were "shelled with heavy artillery and flashing rockets."

The report could not be immediately confirmed by the Serbian sources.

Aeroplanes and military helicopters flew above the

villages during the operation which lasted till 5 a.m. (0300 GMT) Monday, the LDK said, adding that it feared there were dead and injured.

The LDK claimed that numerous Albanian families had fled villages around Decani where they found shelter.

Sunday, nine ethnic Albanians killed in clashes with Yugoslav army units in recent days were buried in the village Slop, near Decani at a ceremony attended by 2,000 people.

It was expected that another 10 Albanians will be buried later Monday in the village of Erec, Albanian sources said.

In the western part of Kosovo bordering Albania, clashes erupted last week between the Yugoslav army and Kosovo Albanians in which at least 26 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo were killed as they tried to infiltrate into Kosovo from Albania.

S. Korea raises nearly \$22,000 to help N. Koreans

SEOUL (AFP) — Residents of the South Korean capital Seoul raised nearly \$22,000 to help starving North Koreans during a day-long fast last weekend in which thousands of people around the world took part, organisers said Monday.

"During that one day alone we raised about 300 million won in Seoul," a spokesman for the Seoul-based International Fasting Day for North Koreans said.

"That is only from here. We have still to get the amount from the funds raised from overseas and across the country," he said, adding that funds were still being collected from around the world.

The campaigners called on South Koreans and people in more than 84 cities worldwide

to go without at least one meal on April 25 and donate money to the fund.

The spokesman said the group would meet Thursday to decide how the money would be spent to help North Korea, which warned earlier this year that its grain stocks would run out by the end of March.

"We are considering two ways. First, by offering food aid to help the starving, and secondly giving fertilisers and other forms of aid to help them in their agriculture," he said.

South Korea's new administration has said it would allow private donations to North Korea, but there would be no government aid until North Korea agrees to set a timetable for the reunification of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean war.

The first government-to-government contact in nearly four years broke down this month in Beijing after Seoul attached the condition to Pyongyang's request for fertiliser.

International Red Cross representatives Saturday said the food situation in North Korea appeared to be improving but a growing shortage of drinking water threatened to bring an outbreak of diseases when warm weather comes.

Already in many hospitals the number of patients — many of them children — suffering from severe diarrhoea has grown, a likely result of increased exposure to contaminated drinking water, according to North Korean doctors whom the aid workers met.

acute food shortages caused by three years of natural disasters and a crumbling Communist economy. This year the World Food Programme has appealed for 660,000 tonnes of food aid and has so far received 40 to 45 per cent of the donations asked for.

The Red Cross estimates North Korea will need about one million tonnes of aid this year — well below the 2.14 million-tonne estimate by the South's National Unification Board.

Unconfirmed reports from refugees in China and low-level North Korean officials have put the death toll from famine in the secretive nation at between one and three million out of a population of 22 million.

Zero gravity experiments resume aboard Columbia

WASHINGTON (AFP) — After solving the U.S. space shuttle Columbia's problems with a piece of aluminium tape and some ingenuity, astronauts Sunday began their tenth day of scientific research, NASA said.

The science crew's four members were each to be subjects in tests aimed at determining how the human nervous system adapts to the weightlessness of space, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration said in a statement.

The experiment will centre on an on-board rotating chair in the Spacelab science module that the crew will use to gather data on the human balance system, according to the agency.

Shuttle Commander Rick Searfoss and Pilot Scott Altman will maintain their skills on a laptop computer and joystick system allowing them to simulate approaches and landings to the Kennedy Space Centre in Cape Canaveral, Florida, NASA said.

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for children and youth
Entertainment for the whole family
At the Royal Cultural Center

Saturday 25th April, 1998
7:00 p.m.

The Brothers Lionheart - Sweden

Sunday 26th April, 1998
4:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m.

Children of Nature - Iceland
Pelle the Conqueror - Denmark

Monday 27th April, 1998
4:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m.

Herman - Norway
Sixten / Dancing Feet - Sweden

Tuesday 28th April, 1998
4:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m.

Pelle the Conqueror - Denmark
Dog Thieves - Finland

Wednesday 29th April, 1998
4:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m.

Whitebear King Valemon - Norway
Benjamin Dove - Iceland

Thursday 30th April, 1998
11:00 a.m.
4:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m.

Dog Thieves - Finland
Benjamin Dove - Iceland
The Brothers Lionheart - Sweden

Friday 1st May, 1998
11:00 a.m.
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Politics of compromise

A MUCH-AWAITED new election law, together with a new press and publications law, will be the focus of the extraordinary parliamentary session to be held this summer.

Since the first article of the Constitution states that Jordan's system of government is parliamentary, the law under which Lower House members are elected is crucial to our state.

It is vital for the development of our democracy that the new election law stems from a broad national debate, involving all political forces, in which civil society plays an active role, as repeatedly advocated by HRH Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal. Depending on the type of electoral regulations that will be enforced, Jordan's political liberalisation could be accelerated or slowed down.

Since the introduction five years ago of the one-person, one-vote system, election reforms have been at the centre of a heated debate between the government and the opposition parties.

The latter have insisted that the one-person, one-vote formula aimed at marginalising their representation in Parliament as, in society where tribal ties are still very strong, voters will tend to cast their single ballot according to family considerations, and not in line with their political beliefs.

The government, on the other hand, has maintained that the formula reflects more faithfully Jordan's new democratic course, launched by His Majesty King Hussein in 1989, as it allows all voters to cast one ballot, regardless of how many seats are allocated to their district.

In the past five years, the government and the opposition have engaged in a tug-of-war rather than in a constructive debate over electoral legislation. For too long, however, it has been a dialogue of the deaf.

Last summer, a few weeks ahead of the November 1997 elections, an attempt to start a government-opposition dialogue collapsed against a wall of reciprocal intransigence.

The lack of real willingness to compromise resulted in the opposition's decision to boycott the elections, which marred the ballot and the image of our democratisation process at home and abroad.

Two weeks ago, the Higher Committee for Coordination among the Opposition Parties announced that it would soon publish its own election law, in response to a government draft currently being reviewed at the prime ministry.

The government has pledged that its doors are open to dialogue, but it has also made clear that all proposals must go through the proper constitutional channels.

The opposition should not miss this chance to have an impact on the future election law. Though out of Parliament following their decision to boycott the last elections, opposition parties can still lobby deputies to have some of their suggestions included in the upcoming legislation.

Despite the fact that the government has maintained that it will not let go on the one-person, one-vote system, the opposition's proposal for a mixed commission to supervise the elections (comprising senior judges and representatives of civil society institutions as well as officials) deserves the government's attention.

"Compromise" might appear to be synonymous with "defeat" to many opposition leaders as well as government officials. But when compromise on a certain political decision stems from genuine mutual recognition of each other's role, then it becomes the cornerstone for building a democracy of which we and our children can be proud.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL Ra'i's Salameh Ekour said that because chief of the U.N. arms inspectors in Iraq Richard Butler has submitted a report claiming that Iraq still holds secrets about its weapons of mass destruction the Security Council is extending the sanctions regime on Baghdad. The council does not give any regard to the suffering of the Iraqi women and children and has proved to be totally under the hegemony of the U.S. and Britain, constantly executing their desires, said the writer. In his report Butler had pointed out that the U.N. inspectors were not able to make progress in their search for the weapons but this is not the fault of Iraq which has complied with all U.N. resolutions and opened up all sites including the presidential palaces for the inspectors, said the writer. Why should the people of Iraq pay for the failure of the inspectors in carrying out their mission and why should the council remain adamant about ending the sufferings of the Iraqi people, asked the writer. It is clear, he said, that Butler is only concerned with helping Washington to impose its terms on Iraq regardless of the consequences on this region and the world at large.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan discussed the renewed mission of the U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross saying that his latest trip has only reaffirmed the fact that the U.S. has proved its failure in pressuring the Israeli government into respecting the peace accords and honouring its commitments. Had Washington been really interested in achieving peace and security in this region, it would have forced the Israelis to comply with the U.N. resolutions and respect the peace accords they signed with the Palestinians, he noted. But he said, it seems that Washington which transformed Ross's mission into a postman carrying letters intends to tell the Palestinians that they had to accept Netanyahu's terms for a settlement as there is no other alternative. The writer said it is clear from Ross's failure in his shuttle diplomacy between Netanyahu and Arafat that his boss the U.S. secretary of state and the British prime minister are not expected to achieve any breakthrough at the coming London meeting.

The View from Fourth Circle

Birth of state of Palestine reflects modern Arab history

By Rami G. Khouri

PALESTINE TODAY accurately mirrors Arab modern history. What is happening in Palestine today should be of great interest to any person who wishes to understand the Arab World and the workings of modern Arab politics. For whatever emerges from the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in coming weeks and months, the phenomenon of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) and its self-rule areas during the past four years has already provided us with a fascinating microcosm of the strengths and weaknesses of the modern Arab state. (I use 'Palestine' both as a geographic and political term, meaning those areas west of the Jordan River where Palestinian Arabs are a majority, and the PNA territories that are slowly taking on the attributes of statehood.)

The first and most important facet of the birth of the state of Palestine as a mirror of modern Arab history is that its demographic and geographic borders are being determined largely by the decisions of non-Arabs. In this case primarily Israel and the United States. Most Arab states suffer chronic internal tensions and border disputes with neighbouring brotherly Arab states in part because of the rather artificial nature of their frontiers and their composition. For Palestine to continue this tradition is predictable, rather fascinating, but still troubling.

The second Palestinian mirroring of modern Arab history is in the instant, heavy concentration of power in the hands of a small number of people — a process organically linked to the sudden manufacturing of statehood and the delineation of frontiers. The PNA's almost total dominance of the political, economic, military and informational-cultural dimensions of Palestinian society is all the more fascinating because Palestinian society pre-1948 was characterised by a great deal of diversity, pluralism and intellectual-political dynamism. The advent of the central authority of the modern state, with its financial resources and many guards, has largely marginalised most non-state sectors of society. That this should happen in a Palestinian community that in exile had

always expected to be a model of democratic pluralism is politically startling, but historically in keeping with the history of modern Arab statehood.

The third way in which Palestine replays modern Arab statehood continues the wider regional tradition is the almost total absence of any kind of real accountability on official power. The formal institutions of popular participation and accountability are all in place in Palestine as they are in most Arab states — the legislature, judiciary, mass media, and human rights and other civil society organisations — but none of them has been able to force meaningful changes in the policies or behaviour of the executive branch. They have all tried to pressure President Yasser Arafat into being more participatory and democratic, including legislative and cabinet threats to resign, but to no avail. Palestine suffers official reports about official corruption, deaths of detainees in custody, abrupt dismissal of judges who rule against the state, sudden closing down of television stations, the detention of human rights activists, and the executive branch's almost contemptuous attitude to the legislature, without any signs of major changes in such behaviour. Palestine's new norm of essentially unaccountable, almost absolute, power wielded by a handful of people is not so surprising, given the precedence for this model in virtually every other Arab state that was born this century.

A fourth interesting dimension of Palestine is the depth of civil society and community institutions alongside the expanding apparatus of the state, including political parties, women's and student groups, professional associations, religious and cultural societies, family and tribal associations, societies to provide health, education and social services, private sector firms, and many other institutions that are not directly controlled by the power of the centralised state. These groups do not impact on the decisions of the state, but they exist alongside it. The depth and breadth of civil society is an expression of three realities: the very ancient traditions of community-

based affiliations in the Middle East; the inability of the modern Arab state to provide for the needs of all its citizens; and, chronic uncertainty about the durability and longevity of the official structures of the state.

The fifth manner in which Palestine replays modern Arab statehood is its heavy, apparently chronic, dependence on foreign money and political validity. Palestine is slightly different from other Arab states in that it is being born after a prolonged period of exile, fragmentation and occupation; but it is no different from most other Arab states in its instant and heavy reliance on foreign cash donations to stay afloat, and its frequent calls for foreign political patronage and protection. Palestine perpetuates a common if awkward Arab willingness to answer to the political and emotional demands of Israel and the United States in order to keep receiving aid, land, and a vote of political confidence. The prevalent modern Arab official tendency to answer to the concerns of the United States Congress, the Israeli prime minister's office, or the whims of CNN anchors as much as to respond to the feelings of one's own people is perhaps understandable and inevitable, in view of the four points above; the question remains if it is sustainable in the long run.

The sixth and perhaps most fascinating way in which Palestine reflects the modern Arab experience of nationhood is that — despite the problematic nature of all the above — the clear majority of Arab citizens seems to accept the situation they live in, finding it occasionally irritating but broadly satisfying and acceptable. The unaccountable, almost total, concentration of power in the hands of small groups of people who manage the affairs of Arab statehood seems not to be a major problem for the majority of Arab people — as long as they, the majority of the citizenry, keep benefiting from such a configuration of frontiers, power and allegiances. This is what the current, complex, often contradictory, but still evolving history of Palestine confirms to us yet again.

The road to peace starts in Jerusalem: The condominium solution

By John V. Whitbeck

THERE WILL never be a durable peace in the Middle East without a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict acceptable both to most Israelis and to most Palestinians. That is a fact. There will also never be a lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without a solution to the status of Jerusalem acceptable both to most Israelis and to most Palestinians. That is also a fact, one which, particularly after the breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian relations caused by Israel's decision in March 1997 to begin constructing the huge Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem, is increasingly difficult (and dangerous) for anyone to ignore.

While it is widely assumed that no such solution exists, there is one solution which has a real chance of being acceptable both to most Israelis and to most Palestinians.

When Israelis and Palestinians speak about Jerusalem, they are not simply establishing negotiating positions. Jerusalem commands too tight a grip on hearts and minds. Their repeated and virtually unanimous positions must be taken seriously. If one accepts, as one must, that no Israeli government could ever accept a redrawing of Jerusalem, and if one accepts, as one must, that no Palestinian leadership could ever accept a permanent status solution which gave the Palestinian State (and, through it, the Arab and Islamic worlds) no share of sovereignty in Jerusalem, then only one solution is conceivable — joint sovereignty over an undivided city.

In the context of a two-state solution, Jerusalem could form an undivided part of both states, constitute the capital of both states and be administered by an umbrella municipal council and local district councils. In the proper terminology of international law, Jerusalem would be a "condominium" of Israel and Palestine.

Condominiums, while rare, are not with-

out precedent. Chandigarh is the joint undivided capital of two neighbouring Indian states. For half a century prior to its independence in 1956, Sudan was a condominium of Britain and Egypt, officially named "Anglo-Egyptian Sudan." For more than 70 years, the Pacific nation of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides Condominium) was under the joint undivided sovereignty of Britain and France. For more than 700 years, until a 1993 constitutional revision, the Principality of Andorra was under the joint undivided sovereignty of French and Spanish "co-princes."

In a sense, Jerusalem can be viewed as a cake that could be sliced either vertically or horizontally. Either way, the Palestinians would get a share of the cake, but, while most Israelis could never voluntarily swallow a vertical slice, they might just be able to swallow a horizontal slice. Indeed, by doing so, Israel would finally achieve international recognition of Jerusalem as its capital.

Jerusalem is both a municipality on the ground and a symbol in hearts and minds. Undivided but shared in this way, Jerusalem could be a symbol of reconciliation and hope for Jews, Muslims, Christians and the world as a whole.

"Joint undivided sovereignty" is a concept which even highly intelligent people are often unable to comprehend. Perhaps, paradoxically, it is too simple to be easily understood. While sovereignty is commonly viewed as the state-level equivalent of ownership, joint undivided ownership of land or a house between husband and wife or, through inheritance, among distant cousins is scarcely uncommon. Such joint undivided ownership is clear as a matter of law and comprehensible as a matter of practice. Joint owners must determine how their common property is to be administered.

In seeking a solution to the status of Jerusalem, it is essential to distinguish

between sovereignty and municipal administration. While municipal administration involves numerous practical questions, sovereignty over Jerusalem is fundamentally a symbolic, psychological and virtually theological question. Symbolism, psychology and theology are extraordinarily important in connection with Jerusalem (more so than with any other city on earth), but it is important to recognise that this is the nature of the question.

Assigning sovereignty over an undivided city both to Israel and to Palestine should satisfy to the maximum degree possible the symbolic and psychological needs of both Israelis and Palestinians. It could also generate profound positive psychological benefits for the quality of "life after peace" by requiring in spirit and in practice a sharing of the city and cooperation with "the other" rather than a new partitioning of the city and mere toleration of "the other" or the continuing domination of one people over another, with all the poisonous frictions that such domination inevitably provokes.

Realistically, there are only three alternative endings to the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace: (1) Israel and Palestine agree on a basis for dividing Jerusalem, and peace is achieved on that basis; (2) Israel and Palestine agree to share an undivided Jerusalem, and peace is achieved on that basis; or (3) Israel and Palestine fail to agree on Jerusalem's status, and there is no peace. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political allies have ruled out dividing Jerusalem in the most categorical conceivable terms, and the Labour Party, whether in power or in opposition, has promised no greater flexibility toward the possibility of dividing the city.

That leaves only the second and third alternatives — a sobering reality which should, logically, stimulate interest among peace-seekers in exploring the potential of the "condominium" solution and in trying

to convince Israeli public opinion that the Holy City so central to the lives of both Israelis and Palestinians (as well as to believers in the three great monotheistic religions throughout the world) can be shared, that a winner-take-all approach produces only losers and that both Israelis and Palestinians must be winners or both will continue to be losers.

A century after the First Zionist Congress was held in 1897 and half a century after Israel was established in 1948, Israelis concerned about their future might well look back at the vision for Jerusalem of Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism: "We'll simply extraterritorialise Jerusalem, which will then belong to nobody and yet to everybody, the holy place common to the adherents of all faiths. The great condominium of culture and morality." Herzl's dream of a Jewish state was wildly impractical at the time, but it existed half a century later. Whether its people ever enjoy peace and security may well depend on whether they can grasp the visionary practicality of Herzl's own recognition that what neither people of the Holy Land could ever relinquish or renounce must therefore be shared.

If Israelis and Palestinians can agree — and soon — that a mutually acceptable solution for the status of Jerusalem does exist, all the other pieces in the delicate peace puzzle should fall into place. Without a mutually acceptable solution for the status of Jerusalem, everything will fall apart. That cannot be permitted to happen.

The road to "intern self-rule" may have started in Gaza and Jericho and been extended to other West Bank cities, but any road to peace must start in Jerusalem.

The writer is an international lawyer in London and Paris who writes frequently on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Middle East 'on brink' of military flare-up

By Rupert Cornwell

A FEW days before the vital London summit between Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, a leading security policy think-tank warned that unless the U.S. used its influence to pull the peace process back from the brink, warfare could break out anew in the Middle East.

In a sharp critique of Washington's policies (and not only in the Middle East) the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) declared that the extreme patience thus far displayed by the U.S. in its role of mediator between Israelis and Arabs was turning from virtue into vice. Unless it acted now, the peace process could collapse completely — leading to a renewed Palestinian uprising, led "certainly by more extreme Islamic elements, perhaps by the PLO itself."

But the fraught situation in the Middle East is only one worry voiced by the IISS annual Strategic Survey. From the Balkans to the Gulf and to financially troubled Asia, its message is the same: In the crunch, almost everything depends on American leadership, and all too often, that leadership is found wanting. The U.S. was the dominant world power. But, John Chipman, the IISS director, said: "It is often late into crisis management and oscillates unpredictably between unilateral and multilateral approaches to international problems."

Moreover "globalisation," by spreading crises faster, had only made matters worse. Even if it committed itself fully, Washington could not be certain of solving every problem — "but unless the U.S. chooses to frame a policy, it is unlikely that any answers will be found."

The assessment heightens the urgency of attending the Israeli-Arab summit promoted by Tony Blair next month. But the same anxiety pervades efforts to attain a durable settlement in Bosnia, where prospects had improved in late 1997 and early 1998. But without peace in Kosovo there could be no stability in the region.

However, the review strikes some less gloomy notes. For the first time in years, the case for abolishing nuclear weapons had entered the mainstream of arms control debate. The Institute also commends NATO for "work well done" in the diplomatic management of enlargement of the alliance.

— The Independent



Arabs in always

Dina Hamdan

NOW THOSE...
were letting go...
saw those things were...
being done of everything...
they've got...
No, you were right the...
first time" responds...
Washington in "Courage...
Under Fire" a fiction about...
the death of a female...
pilot who sacrificed her life...
during the Gulf War to save...
other members in her crew...
Her husband, a pilot, was...
indisputable that Holly...
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the popular rabbit...
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and serving it...
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Hale Makdoud, presi...
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Arabs in film; always the 'bad guy'

Dima Hamdan

"NOW, THOSE f---ers were letting go... I'm sorry sir, those Iraqis were letting loose of everything they've got."

"No, you were right the first time" responds Denzel Washington in "Courage Under Fire," a fiction about an American officer investigating the death of a female pilot, who sacrificed her life during the Gulf War to save other members in her crew.

It is indisputable that Hollywood has a history of slandering anything that is "not American," but it never took such a hard attitude towards any ethnic group as it has towards the Arabs.

When I first decided to write about this topic, I received an indignant reaction from someone, who thought it was so typical of "us" to react so defensively, and deal with the entertainment propaganda as if it was all premeditated. There might not be an act stating that film producers shall commit themselves to making films that attack the Arabs. However, there has been a certain mode during the past two decades, which, at the very least, suggests a correlation between the changes in U.S. political policies, and the ethnic stereotypes portrayed in Hollywood films.

The eighties, for example, was the "Russians" era, the negative exposure was not limited to the Communist system, but went as far as to slandering the Russian public in all aspects, even when these aspects were not related to Russian politics, thus, portraying the Russian people as ignorant, vulgar, and unsophisticated. With the collapse of communism and the end of the cold war, there was an apparent shift towards promoting a more balanced portrait of Russians, however, it was made obvious that this turn around was only due to the fall of communism. One very fine example is James Bond's "Golden Eye," with the opening credit showing an exotic woman with infinite limbs tearing down the statue of Lenin and the communist hammer and sickle.

The same practice applied to Japan, especially after the World War II. In one of the earliest Warner Brothers' "Bugs Bunny" cartoons, the popular rabbit is shown hiding booby traps in ice cream and serving it to Japanese children, who would then have their tongues stuck in the traps. It was only decided to stop airing this particular episode in 1995.

If the same can be applied to the Arabs, then their cinematic profile has changed over the past two decades in tandem with changes in the political sphere. Different stereotypes were displayed according to the desired image, an image. During the eighties, the dominant images were those of greedy oil-rich sheikhs, oversexed men lusting after Western women, and abusive polygamists. Nowadays, however, not only did the Arab image change to characterisations of the "Muslim terrorist," which is offensive to an even wider range of ethnic groups, but it is being stressed repeatedly through different forms which has made it an acceptable norm for the public.

"The image of the Arab is intertwined with U.S. Mideast policy in that the Arab image and U.S. policy reinforce each other," says Dr. Hala Maksoud, president of the ADC (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee). "U.S. policy in the Middle East has generally showed a disregard for the interests and well-being of the Arab peoples. This has essentially sanctioned the negative images of Arabs we see in the American press and in Hollywood as it has made it acceptable to view the Arab as the 'enemy' and the 'other' she says.

Films like "True Lies," "Operation Condor" and "Courage Under Fire" were all downright clichés about the American enduring struggle to combat the ruthless, uncultured Arab terrorists. However, in some films it was inferred through indirect messages, which is even more perilous. "J.I. Jane," for example, is a film about a female marine who challenges everyone to become a member of the "Seals," a division exclusively for males. Throughout the film, several references were made to the Gulf War, portraying it as a heroic American act, and in the last 15 minutes we suddenly see a submarine in the "Mediterranean," where the marines receive a warning that they are entering "hostile" waters. Of course, we do not know why they had to go there in the first place, and what their mission was all about. No names were given, but the distant images of camels and veiled women, and the oriental music playing in the background leaves no room for doubt that the country in question is Libya (unless people believe that Iraq or Saudi Arabia lies on the Mediterranean).

Among other media sectors: news, documentaries, etc., the role of entertainment films cannot be underestimated. As a matter of fact, it might be considered as the most damaging medium. "Much of the anti-Arab hate crimes and discrimination committed against our community are sanctioned by the negative images the public is bombarded with in the media," says Dr. Maksoud. In the above mentioned films, all the Arabic characters are evil and corrupt, there is no "good" Arab. Unlike news and documentaries, entertainment films are not monitored for balance and fairness, and therefore, film makers have the privilege of being as biased as they wish to be.

Children's programmes

According to an extensive study carried out by Dr. Jack Shaheen — a member of the board of advisors at the ADC — it was found that children are exposed to negative images of Arabs on television every week.

Young minds are the most impressionable. If a child laughs when he sees his favourite rabbit torturing foreign children and hiding booby traps in their candy, one can only imagine what sentiments this child would have when he comes across other ethnic children on the street.

"An Arab-American mother was practically in tears when she told me about how students had asked her son in school if people in his country cut off children's ears when they misbehave," recalls Dr. Maksoud. "The child was so distraught he came home crying." Apparently, his friends had seen Walt Disney's "Aladdin," the theme song described Aladdin's birthplace as a land where camels roam and "where they cut your ears if they don't like your face, it's barbaric, but hey, it's home." The popular cartoon also contained other offensive aspects which were modified along with the theme song. However, this only came about after an intensive dialogue with Disney. And still the current cartoon release contains several false images. Although only fiction, such films can have a significant impact on young, impressionable minds.

"Escape: Human Cargo" and "Days of Our Lives" on March 22, 1998 "Escape: Human Cargo" first aired on the popular Showtime Network. The television movie is based on "Flight from Dahrhan," a book by John McDonald, an American businessman who escaped from Saudi Arabia on a crate. The events described in this book took place during the late 70s.

The film, was described by "Entertainment Weekly" as "a quagmire of Middle Eastern clichés." Many protests were made, contesting that the film was "wall-to-wall disgusting stereotypes." In response, Showtime opened a dialogue with representatives from CAIR (The Council of America-Islamic Relations), after which they decided to cancel some promotional spots and reedit others. Showtime also decided to air a statement at the beginning of the picture which reads: "This is one person's experience and does not reflect Arab culture or the Islamic faith." Dr. Jack Shaheen dismissed such disclaimers as useless, and that they sometimes would even have a negative effect.

Apart from the apparent skepticism about the "damage control" in such opening statements, Showtime still failed to explain why this film was largely filmed in Israel, and why the grotesque Arab characters were played by Israeli actors, probably the best incarnation of the term "politically incorrect."

On the other hand, there had been other incidents where television networks were more cooperative. On March 20th, NBC's popular soap opera "Days of Our Lives" broadcast an offensive episode propagating anti-Arab stereotypes.

Complaints were made, and the ADC described NBC's response as "refreshingly responsive and" apologetic. Rosalyn Weinman, Executive Vice President of Broadcast Standards stressed that NBC does not intend to denigrate any ethnic groups. Furthermore, another episode was promptly featured on 27th March, which contained significant modifications as an attempt to dismiss any negative messages inferred from the previous episode.

Alternative media

Along with the mainstream American media, which has been known to take an anti-Arab stance, there has been a recent growth of an alternative media, which takes a more balanced stance and sheds light on various aspects of the Middle East, which were otherwise disregarded by the mass media. At the same time, the American public had become increasingly suspicious of the mainstream media, especially due to the video game style reporting and analysis of the 1991 Gulf war. Although the alternative media tries to present an unbiased stance and offers a greater variety of views and opinions, it does not always appeal to the majority, and its credibility is constantly in question, therefore, the extent of its impact on increasing the public's awareness remains vague.

Several attempts are being made by Arab and Muslim bodies to strengthen their relationship with the media. But the bulk of entertainment films continue to exploit the Arabs. And whether such practices are politically motivated or merely done to "amuse" the public, the effects must be taken seriously. Several debates are going on about the effect of films in promoting violence, smoking and drug abuse — the issue of promoting ethnic prejudice is just as grave and should be dealt with.

The writer is a sales executive at BYTE Middle East. She contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

New historians say archives prove ruthlessness of Zionist settlers

By Adam LeBor

AS ISRAEL approaches its 50th anniversary, a fresh generation of Israeli-born scholars is using official government archives and declassified documents to deconstruct the myths surrounding the state's founding.

Sometimes reviled as "traitors" and "self-haters" — that is Jews who are anti-Semitic — the "new historians" as they are dubbed are illustrating how the Palestinians who fled in 1948 were the victims of organised and systematic ethnic cleansing.

Israelis have for decades been taught that Palestine was largely uninhabited until the arrival of the first Zionist settlers from central Europe at the turn of the century. This theory was encapsulated in the motto "a land without a people for a people without a land".

Israeli students are also taught that the few Arabs who lived in

Palestine upped and ran away after being told to flee by neighbouring Arab governments as they attacked the new-born state, while the Israelis made valiant efforts to try and persuade them to stay.

Documents and letters preserved by the key players tell a different story. "Previously Israel had no historiography, only ideology, myth and indoctrination," said Tom Segev, author of 1949 and the First Israeli, one of the new historians to challenge accepted wisdom.

"Israel has a relatively liberal policy on access to archives and so it is possible to check their contents against the myths and ideology. When you read these papers you think 'wow, that's not the way we learnt this at school.' Some of the facts are very shocking," Segev said.

Such as this extract from the diaries of Yosef Nahmani, a director of the Jewish National Fund office in eastern Galilee for 30

years. Nahmani's diaries were originally published in an abridged version, but Israeli historian Benny Morris published this extract from the unedited manuscript in the Journal of Palestine Studies, describing events in the Arab village of Safsaf during the 1948 war of independence: "The inhabitants had raised a white flag, the [Israeli] soldiers separated the men and women, tied the hands of 50-60 fellahin [peasants] and shot and killed them and buried them in a pit. Also, they raped several women."

In Salha, where a white flag had been raised, they had killed about 60-70 men and women. Where did they come by such a measure of cruelty — is there no more human way of expelling the inhabitants? That these are Israeli sources, and so cannot be dismissed as foreign propaganda, increases their shock value, said Segev.

Other documents reveal the extent of institutionalised racism against Jewish immigrants from Arab countries among the European elite, who largely came from Poland, central Europe and Russia. Officials at one Jewish Agency meeting in 1949 discussed how an influx of Polish and Russian Jews could not be housed in the same tents as the Jews from Arab countries. Instead the European Jews would be housed in hotels. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to ensuring that the decision would not be discovered by the press.

Adam LeBor is the presenter of The Promised Land, a four-part series on the 50th anniversary of Israeli independence, broadcast on Radio 5, that started on Sunday 12 April.

— The Independent

Chirac and Jospin push for reform to restrict political 'multi-jobbing'

By Olivier Biffaud

WHAT HAS been called the "modernisation" — it is more a case of reform of the French political system under the stewardship of the power-sharing president, Jacques Chirac, and the prime minister, Lionel Jospin — got off to a flying start earlier this month. The cabinet approved two bills, drawn up by interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, that will drastically restrict political "multi-jobbing."

In concrete terms this will mean that no elected representative will be allowed to hold more than two posts at the same time. Someone who is a member of parliament may not at the same time be president of a region or département, or mayor of a city, town or village, though he or she may be a councillor at the local or regional level.

The government's three-point plan aims to bring about "a more demanding commitment to public service," at the same time as "an increased participation by women in political office" and "a clarification of respective responsibilities within each institution."

The restriction of multi-jobbing was the first plank of Chirac's blue-print for modernising the political system after last month's regional elections had demonstrated the degree of leverage the far-right National Front (FN) could exert on the mainstream right. It is also something that was consistently advocated by Jospin during the presidential campaign of 1995 and by the Socialist Party (PS) in 1996.

As soon as he became prime minister last year, Jospin reiterated his views on the issue in his general policy statement of June 19. He stressed that a restriction of multi-jobbing was something that had not only become "a priority" for political leaders, but was in tune with public opinion.

During the president's traditional July 14 television interview, Chirac made it clear that he shared Jospin's view, and that his stance on the multi-jobbing issue was firm. He said he favoured "limitation, and even restriction to a single office, on condition the matter was thoroughly debated in parliament."

By Nov. 20, when he addressed the conference of

the Association of French Mayors, Chirac had shifted his ground slightly. He hoped that "those women and men who have the weighty responsibility of drawing up the law are not cut off from the realities of life on the ground."

Meanwhile, Jospin had begun a series of consultations with representatives of all the political parties except the FN, with the aim of finding out what they thought of multi-jobbing. It is such a complex issue that differences of opinion do not exactly follow the dividing line between right and left. There are people for and against multi-jobbing in every political party.

Jospin was initially tempted to get parliament to approve at least a first reading of the planned new legislation before last month's regional and cantonal elections. But in the end he decided not to rush things. A minority of deputies belonging to the Socialist group tried to put pressure on Jospin, but to no avail. The prime minister decided to heed the arguments of one of his advisers, Gérard Le Gall, who had urged him to take his time.

On Feb. 11 Jospin sent his

proposals to the party leaders he had consulted. Presented as "balanced solutions" designed to make the democratic system "more efficient and closer to the people," they have been included in the two bills that Jospin hopes will receive a first reading by June 30, when parliament goes into summer recess.

A third bill — of a constitutional nature, since it involves barring government ministers from holding executive office in local assemblies — has yet to be drawn up. It will require a change in the fundamental law, as indeed will the introduction of "equal access" for men and women to political, professional and social positions of responsibility; and it appears to constitute the only bone of contention between the president and the prime minister.

Under the terms of the first bill approved by the cabinet it will no longer be possible for anyone elected to the office of deputy or senator also to be a member of the European Parliament (MEP). A deputy or a senator will not be allowed to hold an executive position at local government level or occupy more than one post as

a (non-executive) councillor on top of his or her job in parliament or the senate.

The second bill states that no one may hold more than two non-executive posts at local level (as a regional, general, municipal, Corsican or Paris councillor), and no one may hold more than one executive post at that level. People who are already MEPs may not hold any of these posts either, nor may they hold more than one non-executive post.

The presidency of intercommunal structures and the post of deputy president or deputy mayor in local assemblies are not covered by the provisions of the bill.

The prime minister's office has indicated that it is now up to members of parliament to propose the number of amendments they see fit. Whatever happens, the Socialists have no intention of spearheading the reform, which is something they could easily have done

— Le Monde



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SERIES 200

ABOVE ALL, IT'S A ROVER.

The new Rover 200 will be on display at Romero Restaurant from the 27th to the 30th of April.

The full Rover saloon model range will be displayed at Haret Jdoudna in Madaba on Friday, 1st of May from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Phosphate company raises capital; net profit falls sharply to JD10.9m

**** THE JORDAN Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) will be raising its capital from JD44 million to JD60 million over the coming two years through private and public subscription following the approval of the general assembly, during an extraordinary session, in order to consolidate the company's financial standing.**

The general assembly also approved the annual balance sheet and the 1997 profit and loss statement which showed a drop in net profit before tax from JD21.3 million in 1996 to JD10.9 million in 1997. Of the net profit posted last year, JD10.7 million was generated from phosphate sales and JD0.2 million were achieved from sales of processed fertiliser and its derivatives. After taking into account the income tax allocation, the 1997 net profit stood at JD4.16 million compared to JD9.93 million in 1996.

JPMC Vice Chairman Safwan Touqan told the general assembly that the company's sales last year amounted to JD245 million (JD254.4 million in 1996) of which JD142 million were from phosphate sales and JD104 million from sales of processed fertiliser. Another JD4 million were earned from activities associated with the manufacturing of phosphate and fertiliser. But on the other hand, the company paid JD27.3 million in mining fees on its sales.

Dr. Touqan told the shareholders that the JPMC achieved an eight per cent increase in sales through higher exports in addition to the supplies to the joint project established with India at the Shidiyeh free zone. He said that a total of 4.37 million tonnes of raw phosphate were exported and that around 1.11 million tonnes were consumed

at the industrial compound. About 350,000 tonnes were exported to the Indo-Jordanian Company at the Shidiyeh's free zone.

According to the annual report, JPMC produced a total of 5.89 million tonnes of dry phosphate last year, 10 per cent more than the 5.35 million tonnes produced in 1996.

The company closed 1997 by having a total of JD34.7 million in cash at hand and banks compared to only JD5.6 million at the end of 1996. The amount included the net funds received from selling bonds to finance the second stage projects at the Shidiyeh mines. Total fixed assets increased by JD35.4 million, from JD330.5 million to JD365.9 million due mainly to the purchase of equipment and machinery and the capitalisation of two projects at Shidiyeh and the industrial compound.

Despite repaying JD48.6 million of instalments and interest on loans extended to the company, the outstanding credits at the end of last year totalled JD81.8 million of which JD18.5 million were local credits and JD63.3 million outside loans. The long-term portion of the debt was shown in the balance sheet to be JD59.5 million and the short-term to be JD22.3 million.

JPMC General Manager Sameh Madani spoke about the future plan to increase output by noting that the company worked during 1997 on resolving the production bottlenecks at the Shidiyeh mine and on starting to implement the second stage that aims at raising the phosphate output from Shidiyeh from 3.2 million tonnes to around 7.5 million tonnes annually starting from the year 2001. (Al Dostour + Al Ra'i + Al Aswaj).

Saudi Arabia embarks on path of privatisation

DUBAI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia, to shield its economy from oil price fluctuations, has embarked on the path of privatisation with its decision to create a public limited company for telecommunications, economists have said.

"The impact of price fluctuations on the economy is the biggest problem of the Gulf states, that's why economic diversification is so important," said Beshir Bakheet, director of Bakheet Financial Advisors in Riyadh.

The announcement last week to set up a Saudi Telecommunications Co. (STC) was "part of a series of measures to transfer government companies to the private sector" and improve efficiency, he said, contacted from Dubai.

The annual revenue from the telephone sector is almost four billion riyals (\$1.06 billion), the government's second largest source of income after oil exports which generated more than \$51 billion in 1997.

The government has not disclosed the operating costs, but according to diplomats the telecoms sector is run on a big deficit.

"Telephone lines are in a poor state. Between five and 10 million new lines are needed, but you have to pay a bribe to get a new line," one diplomat said, while residents said a mobile phone can take more than a year's wait.

The privatisation of telecoms will be the first since the transfer of 30 per cent of the industrial group Saudi Basic Industries Corp. (SABIC) more than a decade ago.

Industry and Electricity Minister Hashim Yamani said to October that "the

government is looking at privatisation on a national framework" and that privatisations would take place "one after the other" after telecoms.

The next in line are the postal service, Saudi Arabian Airlines and the railways, according to Mr. Bakheet.

Finance and National Economy Minister Ibrahim Al Assaf has dismissed criticism of the slow pace of promised moves toward privatisation in the oil-rich Arab Gulf kingdom.

"It's typical of our work. We do not make announcements until such investments are ready to be put to the public," he said. "There is serious work underway to look into new areas where the private sector could play major roles."

There has been no date set for an initial public offering of shares in the STC, but Mr. Bakheet said it would "probably take two years" to have the necessary structure in place for the new company.

It will figure in the top five on the Saudi stock market, he said, while the London-based and Saudi-owned newspaper Al Hayat estimated its capital at \$3 billion.

Saudi Arabia wants to give the private sector a role in services traditionally supplied by the government, like electricity. But, diplomats said, there will be no wholesale selling off of state assets.

But the Saudi electricity network, which needs a massive \$117 billion in investments over the next 25 years as the population triples, and its airline need financial restructuring before privatisation, the diplomats said.

Bankers expect government to revive plan to issue bonds

By Issam Qadmani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian bankers Monday expected that the coming week will witness the revival of the government plan to issue government sovereign bonds worth \$100 million on world markets.

Bank sources said the government had delayed the move for some time in view of the collapse of the markets in Asia and the repercussions in the European markets.

These sources expect a delegation from a French bank to visit Jordan in the coming two weeks to discuss the issue with Central Bank officials.

Jordan attaches great hopes on entering world markets, particularly in London. Through issuing the bonds the government hopes to pay back part of its debts to the U.S.

Banking system unprepared for millennium bug — report

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Many of the world's big global banks have failed to fix the so-called millennium bug that could cause computer systems to go haywire by failing to recognise the year 2000, an industry group says.

The Institute of International Finance (IIF), which represents some 285 financial institutions, said the year 2000 computer problem, or Y2K, could cause breakdowns in global payment flows.

"There are quite a number of banks that are just not adequately prepared for the Y2K problem," the group has said in a report.

The Y2K problem results from mainframe computers that use two digits to represent year. Thus, when 2000 arrives, the systems may read the year "00" as 1900 or may fail to calculate the year altogether.

"The interconnectedness of the financial services industry and its importance to global economic stability demand that firms worldwide make all necessary effort to ensure that critical systems are Y2K-compliant," the report said.

"Unless the computer problem is solved, essential business functions such as interest rate calculations and settlement systems may

fail, data could be corrupted or inadvertently deleted."

The IIF said it has established a checklist for upgrading computer systems as "an essential bank management tool."

It said some systems may already experience problems prior to Jan. 1, 2000, such as calculating maturity dates or interest beyond 2000.

"As product maturity dates cross the 2000 barrier during the next 21 months, the frequency of these disruptions will increase dramatically," the report said.

The institute comprises large financial institutions from the United States, Europe, Japan and elsewhere.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7903	0.5994	1.4878	132.19	1.4390	1767.30	2.0112	5.9985
DE Mark	0.5598	-	0.3345	0.8317	73.88	0.8035	987.37	1.1243	3.3535
GB Sterling	1.6683	2.9874	-	2.4837	220.67	2.4007	2948.66	3.3575	10.1617
CH Franc	0.6721	120.16	0.4021	-	88.85	0.9654	1186.79	135.09	4.0302
JP Yen	0.0078	1.2638	0.4630	1.1262	-	1.0881	133.38	152.17	4.5391
CA Dollar	0.6949	1.2432	0.4160	1.0397	1.09	-	1228.13	1.3976	4.1679
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0112	0.3383	0.0842	1340.48	0.8126	-	11.37	3.3916
NL Guilder	0.4972	88.81	0.2976	74.02	65.62	0.7146	878.97	-	2.9829
FR Franc	0.1667	0.2981	0.0997	24.8077	22.00	0.2397	33.81	33.6100	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7501	0.3770	3.6380	0.3054	3.6729	1525.00	3.4160
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2893	0.5317	5.1312	0.4308	5.1804	2150.92	4.8181
Saudi Riyal	0.2667	0.1891	-	0.1008	0.97	0.0614	0.98	406.66	0.9109
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9472	-	9.65	0.8101	9.74	4046.09	9.0610
Qatar Dinar	0.2749	0.1949	1.0308	1.0308	-	0.0840	1.01	419.19	0.9390
Kuwait Dinar	3.2742	2.3214	12.2785	1.2344	11.91	-	12.03	4993.12	0.9390
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0210	1.0206	0.9908	0.0832	-	415.20	0.9301
Lebanese/1000	0.98	0.4649	2.4591	0.2472	2.3856	0.2003	2.4085	-	2.2400
Egyptian	0.2527	0.2076	1.0978	0.1104	1.0550	0.0894	1.0752	448.43	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revised
Brent	13.38	13.82
W. Texas	14.89	15.10
Bonny	13.38	13.82
Dubai	12.18	12.31
U.L. Gas	155.00	155.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4777	0.16984	0.39742	35.2659
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48773	0.1632	0.40584	36.0075
KW Dinar	3.2742	5.8581	1.96271	4.88043	433.088
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.78285	1.59008	3.95413	350.754
CY Pound	1.9018	3.4001	1.1278	2.8303	251.019

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	310.3	310.8
Silver (oz's)	6.21	6.24
Platinum (oz's)	409.7	411.7
AL (3 Months)	1467	1439
CU (3 Months)	1880	1864
Zinc (3 Months)	1117	1120
Lead (3 Months)	575	578
Ni (3 Months)	5500	5520

Libor Fixing

Period	-1	-3	-6	-1
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.6719	5.7422	5.8358	5.9688
GBP	7.4219	7.4792	7.4792	7.4322
JPY	0.6354	0.7083	0.7800	0.7708
DEM	3.6561	3.7500	3.8499	4.0375
FRF	3.8313	1.6172	1.4222	1.9825
CHF	1.4922	3.6172	3.7168	3.8376
ITL	5.4920	5.2008	4.9070	-

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
New York	DOW JONES	8927.36	-137.26	-1.51	9058.64	8878.78	9064.82
New York	S&P 500	1087.46	-20.44	-1.84	1107.9	1082.99	1107.9
London	FT-SE 100	5781.4	-112.5	-1.92	5853.9	5739.2	5863.9
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16849.85	-361.29	-2.28	16988.7	16845.3	16911.2
Paris	CAC 40	3698.31	-50.03	-1.35	3770.15	3687	3783.34
Frankfurt	DAX	5088.13	-58.15	-1.09	5126.03	5073.07	5144.28

Private sector must help pay for crises, but how?

WASHINGTON (AFP) — World finance officials are having trouble working out how to make private investors share the cost of Asian-style financial crises without violating their own code of non-interference in markets.

The IMF stepped up the pressure to find a solution this week, providing evidence that speculation against the Thai baht triggered the devaluation which sparked the Asian crisis last year.

An IMF study found that hedge funds had built up large positions against the currency in the two months before the devaluation.

Crisis-hit economies, particularly Malaysia, have argued for months that foreign currency speculation caused the meltdown, but the IMF study provided the first concrete proof.

Hedge funds are private investment pools, often based offshore to escape regulations on capital movement, which move billions of dollars in and out of markets in an effort to make a profit.

In the case of the Thai baht, hedge funds bet that the Thai baht would not hold the value at which it was pegged against a basket of currencies, exerting such pressure on the currency that in the end the government was forced to devalue, leaving them with large profits.

Lebanese minister, manufacturers visit Libya

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Lebanese Agriculture Minister Chawki Fakhouri and a delegation of Lebanese manufacturers arrived in Tripoli early Monday on a mission to boost bilateral trade.

The three-day visit is the first to Libya by a group of Lebanese manufacturers since the U.N. imposed an air and arms embargo against Tripoli in 1992.

The minister and business leaders came here by road from neighbouring Tunisia.

Mr. Fakhouri told Libyan officials when he arrived that "Libya, which is in difficult economic circumstances, needs Lebanon's help and in return we're counting on you to support the Lebanese economy."

The minister said Lebanon wanted "to open wide Libya's doors to its agricultural and industrial products."

In February, Libya made its first purchase of Lebanese grapes and apples after "Lebanese President Elias Hrawi appealed to Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi," Mr. Fakhouri said.

Jacques Sarraf, president of the Lebanese Industrialists Association, said that Lebanon exports to Libya amounted to \$20 million in 1997. "That's very little. We hope to export more."

Lebanese businessman Dimritri Triandafilis, who has already sold \$3 million of pumps to Libya said the embargo "has resulted in a surcharge on sea or land transportation, but the Libyans have the money and are good about paying."

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BritishBank announces major community initiative to benefit Jordanians

HSBC Group Chairman Institutes GBP 1 million foundation

BRITISHBANK has announced the formation of the BritishBank Foundation — a GBP 1 million community initiative to benefit nationals in the region. Sir William Purves, Chairman, HSBC Holdings Plc and BritishBank said: "The Foundation is a symbol of our close association with the region and a significant announcement marking our continuing commitment to the Middle East."

The Bank has committed GBP 1 million to an independent trust in Jersey, to fund initiatives and activities that will directly benefit local communities. Initially, the focus for the fund will be education. "It is a source of immense personal pride that in the last 50 years, BritishBank has been an innovative catalyst of economic development at the heart of the community. Today we can reflect with pride on our achievement made possible by our customers, partners and employees," Sir William said.

Chief Executive Officer of BritishBank in Jordan Mr. John Pascoe said: "We are currently exploring alternative proposals of how best to allocate the funds in order to most benefit the local community."

"We look forward to announcing details of our first initiative shortly."

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Courier outduels Chang to win U.S. Clay Court title

ORLANDO (AFP) — Jim Courier extended Michael Chang's title drought Sunday, outlasting the top seed and defending champion 7-5, 3-6, 7-5 in the final of the U.S. Men's Clay Court Championships.

Courier, appearing in his first event since his emotional Davis Cup victory three weeks ago, hit a forehand winner on match point to complete the only service break of the final set. He collected his 23rd ATP Tour title and \$37,500.

A winner of 32 career ATP Tour titles, Chang is still searching for his first singles win since the Legg Mason Classic in Washington last July.

In February, Chang lost in the final of the Kroger St. Jude in Memphis, his only other appearance in a final since his victory here last year.

Ranked as high as second in his career, the 26-year-old Chang has suffered through 11 early-round defeats and a recent knee injury since winning this event last year.

Chang's ranking will fall from 12th to as low as 15th when the new ATP rankings are released Monday.

Courier barely managed to hold serve in the third set. In the seventh game, he battled through six deuces and saved a break point. In the ninth game, he rallied from 0-40 down to win the next five points.

He saved another break point in the 11th game before breaking Chang in the next game to win the battle of the only American men to claim French Open titles since 1956.



Jim Courier

Currently ranked 57th in the world, the 27-year-old Courier will jump to 40th in

next week's rankings. He won four Grand Slams over an eight-event span and

held the World No. 1 ranking four times from 1991 to 1993.

Krajicek, Berasategui pull out of BMW Open

MUNICH (AFP) — The two losers at this weekend's Monte Carlo Open semi-finals withdrew Sunday for the BMW Open starting on Monday.

Dutchman Richard Krajicek and Spain's Alberto Berasategui cited back injuries as the reason for their late pullouts.

Both would have been seeded at the Munich event but will have to report to the site this week for a medical exam under ATP Tour rules.

The top of the 32-man field remains unchanged with Briton Greg Rusedski heading the list as top seed.

The Canadian-born player, will be hoping to improve his form after winning only a single match last week in Monte Carlo before being hammered by the semi-retired Boris Becker.

Seeded second is Swede Jonas Bjorkman, who, like Rusedski, broke into the world Top Five last year. Bjorkman's form has been compromised by influenza over the past month and he has failed to produce many results of note.

He was beaten early in Monte Carlo and starts here against Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev.

French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten is third, ahead of Briton Tim Henman.

Kuerten versus Goran Ivanisevic, Henman against



Alberto Berasategui



Greg Rusedski

German Jens Knippschild and Australian fifth seed and defending champion Mark Philippoussis highlight Monday's opening-day play.

American Andre Agassi is showing that he's serious about making an impression again on clay, playing on the surface for the second week

in a row in Europe. The eighth-seeded former World No. 1 has an opening match with Australian Todd Woodbridge.

Juve, Lens bear down on title

PARIS (AFP) — A superb solo effort from Alessandro Del Piero enabled Juventus to line up their 25th Italian league title on Sunday with a controversial 1-0 victory over Inter Milan.

And unheralded Lens are ready for a championship coronation of their own in France after demolishing Bastia 5-1, although rivals Metz won by the only goal in Toulouse to remain in the hunt by their fingertips with one game left.

But things are still far from clear in the German Bundesliga after Bayern Munich closed the gap to one point Sunday with a 2-1 win over third-placed Bayer Leverkusen at the Olympic Stadium.

Ruggiero Rizzitelli's second-half winner put Bayern right back on the coat-tails of Kaiserslautern, who had come back from two goals down on Friday to beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-2 with an Olaf Marschall hat-trick.

The race is over in Spain with Barcelona having long wrapped up the title but Real Madrid could now lose out on second spot to Athletic Bilbao after a disappointing 2-2 draw in Merida.

Real, who face Juventus in the Champions Cup final next month in Amsterdam, needed a late Davor Suker goal to grab a point which keeps them just on course for runners-up spot and another crack at the Champions League — in case they succumb to Juve.

Fortunately for the madrilenos, Bilbao were also less than convincing as they drew 1-1 at Celta Vigo.

But Del Piero's goal was the main talking point as Juventus channeled their followers in Turin by opening up a four-point lead in the Serie A with just three matches left.

Sparks flew during and after the clash with a sending-off for Inter coach Gigi Simoni after Ronaldo was denied a penalty and Brazilian teammate Ze Elias was dismissed for a reckless aerial challenge.

Ronaldo went down after a 71st minute collision in the penalty area with Juventus defender Mark Juliano, but the referee waved play on.

"There was no doubt about that incident, only the referee didn't see the penalty," fumed Ronaldo, who was fined in January for past comments about allegedly biased refereeing against Inter and for Juventus.

Asked if he felt robbed after the game, Ronaldo answered: "After this match, and after so many others which have gone the same way as this one."

"For me, it's shameful what happened here today. They can punish me again, they can give me another fine, but things happen, everyone sees them and things cannot continue like this."

Ronaldo's comments are bound to land him in hot water with the Italian football authorities.

But his feelings were shared by club president Massimo Moratti, who walked out in disgust at referee Piero Ceccarini's verdict.

"It's the first time in life that I've left before the end of a match," he said. "But I couldn't say there and be taken for a fool."

Inter were doubly furious about the penalty claim, after Juliano either deliberately or accidentally



Juventus' Dutch player Edgar Davids (L) and Marc Juliano (R) sandwich in Milan's Brazilian striker Ronaldo (C) during their Italian Serie A soccer match Turin. Juventus defeated Inter 1-0 (Reuters photo)



Bayern Munich's Lothar Matthaeus (up) heads the ball with Markus Happe of Bayer 04 Leverkusen during their Germany's first division match in Munich. Bayern won the match 2-1 and ranks second in Germany's first division (Reuters photo)

obstructed Ronaldo's run through the area, as the same action finished with a penalty at the other end.

Inter defender Taribo West was adjudged to have tripped Del Piero, who saw his spot-kick saved by goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca. But the striker made amends by running through on 21 minutes, dribbling past defender Salvatore Fresi and squeezing a narrow angled shot past Pagliuca into the far corner.

Elsewhere in the Serie A, Parma came from behind to beat Lazio 2-1 with two goals in four minutes.

Lazio suffered a double setback as Croatian striker Alen Boksic twisted his knee and will miss both Wednesday's Italian Cup final second leg against AC Milan and the UEFA Cup final in Paris against Inter Milan on May 6.

The other match between next season's UEFA Cup candidates saw Udinese earn a 4-2 victory over AS Roma. German ace Oliver Bierhoff, who moves to AC Milan next season, scored twice to overtake Ronaldo as league top scorer with 23.

In France, Lens enjoyed the perfect start against Bastia when Tony Vairelles put them ahead in the 14th minute with a header.

But the packed Felix Bollaert stadium was shocked into silence four minutes after the restart, when Bastia equalised.

Lubomir Moravcik curled over a freekick and Stephane Perez rose to nod the ball inside Guillaume Warmuz's near post.

Within minutes, however, Smicer was on hand to fire home a low volley and put Lens back on the title track.

Vairelles put the issue beyond doubt with the third on the hour with an unstoppable shot. Anton Drobnjak rubbed in Lens' superiority with the fourth from the spot for his 14th of the season before Vairelles clipped in to complete his hat-trick in the final seconds.

Frederic Meyrieu was Metz's hero in their 1-0 win as he blasted home a deflected free-kick from 30 yards for his sixth of the season in the 58th minute.

Lens should now wrap up the title at Auxerre in a fortnight, while Metz have a tough match at home to UEFA Cup hopefuls Lyon.

Even if Lens draw, should Metz win by less than five goals, then Lens take the title.

Marseille stay third after their 0-0 draw at home to Strasbourg, during which Fabrizio Ravanelli blasted a spotkick over the bar.

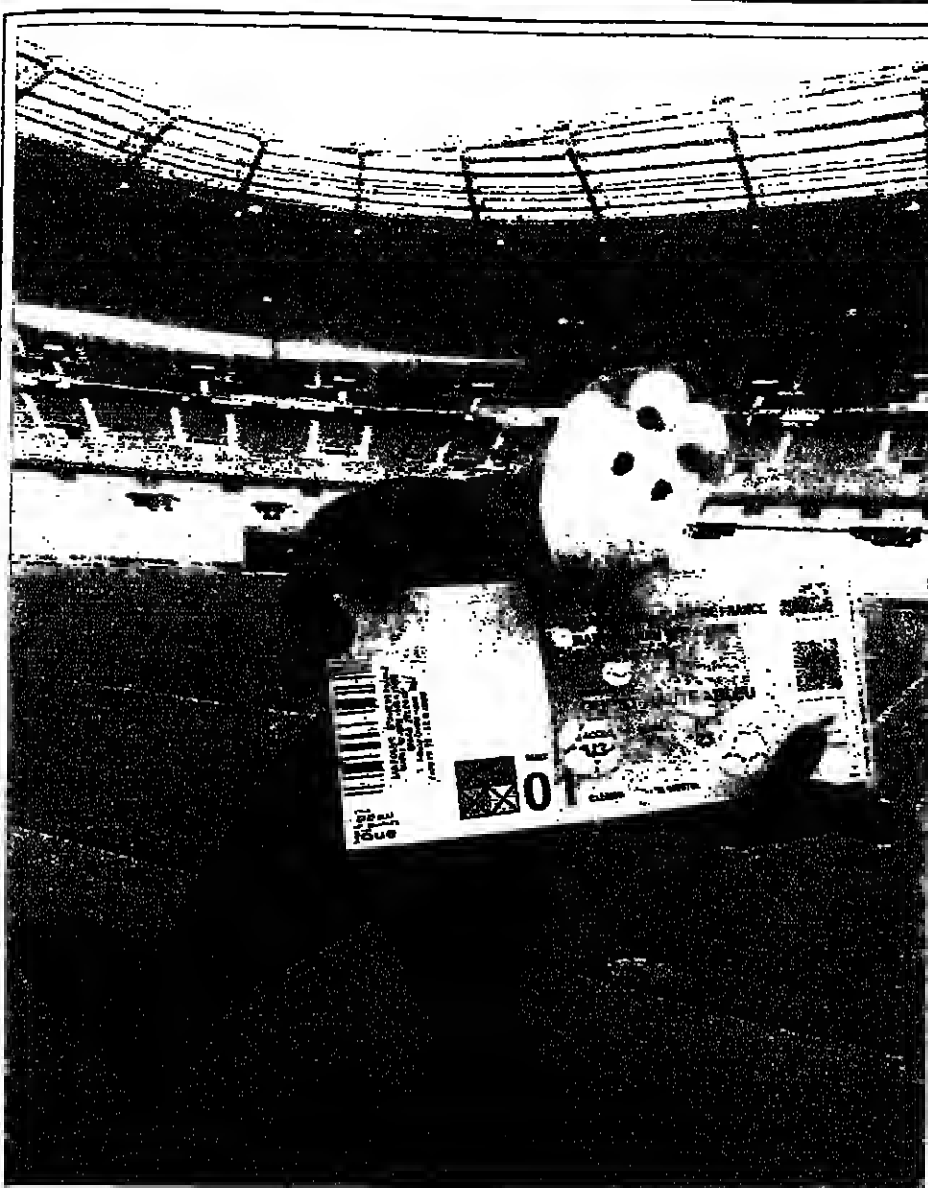
Paris Saint Germain dropped to eighth as they bowed 2-1 to outgoing champions Monaco, David Trezeguet heading a last-gasp winner.

Elsewhere in Europe, FC Bruges wrapped up the Belgium league for the eleventh time in their history after their closest rivals Genk lost 3-1 on Sunday to Lierse. Bruges later celebrated by winning at Anderlecht.

And Porto made it four championship wins on the trot after defeating local rivals Boavista 3-2 with goals from Sergio Conceio, Paulinho Santos and Zahovic.

In the Dutch league, champions Ajax went down to only their second defeat of the campaign in losing 2-0 at Vitesse Arnhem but are still a mammoth 17 points ahead of PSV Eindhoven, who shared six goals with Feyenoord.

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Footix, the mascot of the France 98 Soccer World Cup poses for photographers with a giant ticket for the June 10 World Cup opening match between Brazil and Scotland. France's World Cup organizers will make another 40,000 tickets available to European fans after several participating countries returned unsold tickets from their official allocation (Reuters photo)

CAF Cup

Favourites Raja Casablanca fail to impress against Senegal

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Victory eluded the clubs favoured to win the annual African football competition after a weekend full of surprises.

Champions League holders Raja Casablanca of Morocco, elevated to the role of favourites following the sensational first-round exit of Al-Ahli from Egypt, lost 2-1 in Senegal to Douanes.

Samba Dione scored his fourth goal in five cup ties to give the customs club a 22nd-minute lead and Abdoulaye Samba added a second nine minutes after half-time.

Nouredine Ziati pulled one back midway through the second half and Raja should overcome the deficit in two weeks at home, where they struck six goals past a Benin team in the previous round.

Former Champions League and CAF Cup Winners Esperance of Tunisia will complete a unique hat-trick if they add the Cup-Winners Cup to their collection this year.

The star-studded outfit remain the team to beat in the Nelson Mandela Cup despite falling 1-0 in Uganda to Express, whose goal came from Livingstone Mbabazi after 14 minutes.

Express hardly need reminding that when compatriots Kampala City Council visited Tunis last year for a CAF Cup semi-final, they were at the wrong end of a six-goal hiding.

Zamalek of Egypt, African champions a record four times and overwhelming favourites to lift the CAF Cup for national championship runners-up, cold manage only a 0-0 draw at home to Al Hilal of Sudan.

The home team won far more possession yet rarely threatened goalkeeper Ahmed al-Nour and Al-Hilal

almost snatched victory near the end when Anas al-Nour failed to score with only Nader al-Sayed to beat.

Defeat for Zamalek in Khartoum next month would complete a disastrous year for Egyptian clubs, who looked set to mount serious challenges for the three trophies.

Champions Al Ahli fielded a reserve team in the second leg with Coffee of Ethiopia and were eliminated on away goals and a similar fate befell cup winners Ismailia against Eritreans Red Sea.

Coffee shared four goals with Tanzanian visitors Young Africans in Addis Ababa while Red Sea crashed 5-1 to Costa do Sol in Mozambique, where Artur Comboio grabbed a 23-minute hat-trick.

There were surprise away victories for debutants Manning Rangers of South Africa and Eagle Cement of Nigeria in the Champions League and Uralii upset crack Tunisian outfit Etoile du Sahel 1-0 in Kenya.

Union Douala of Cameroon edged Wydad Casablanca of Morocco 1-0 through a late first-half goal from Oum in a high-profile Cup-winners Cup clash between former continental champions.

The CAF Cup clash featuring Daring Club Motema Pembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Stade Bandjoun of Cameroon attracted the biggest crowd of the weekend.

But the 70,000 crowd in Kinshasa endured 90 frustrating minutes before Simon Ebele conceded the own goal that gave the Congolese a fragile advantage.

Players endure 43 penalties to decide soccer game

BRISBANE (AP) — Two semi-professional soccer teams faced the agony of a penalty shootout — then endured it for an amazing 43 attempts before a winner was decided.

Sunday's match, part of the Queensland Federation Ansett Cup, saw The Gap triumph over Rocklea 2-21 on penalties after the teams were level at 3-3 in normal play.

As in every penalty shootout, there was a hero and a villain in this marathon match, which lasted three hours, one minute, instead of the usual 90.

The Gap's Scott Cunningham scored twice from the spot despite being unable to run because of a torn hamstring.

Under the normal rules of FIFA, each team takes five kicks and if a winner has not been determined, the sudden death format will apply.

But every player from each team scored from the first 11 kicks, including Cunningham.

Cunningham, with a strapped leg and ice attached, had to take his kick from a stationary position and was then called back a second time as the teams went through a second round of another 11 kicks.

The match was finally decided when Rocklea captain Tom Novach kicked his penalty straight to the goalkeeper.

New York beat Miami 96-86

MIAMI (AP) — With a burst of emotion and a balanced attack that was missing in Game 1, the New York Knicks landed a counterpunch against the Miami Heat.

John Starks scored 25 points. Allan Houston had 24 and Larry Johnson 22 as the Knicks rallied Sunday from a 14-point deficit to beat the Heat 96-86 and even their best-of-5 series at 1-1.

Terry Cummings, who didn't even play in Game 1, grabbed 14 rebounds, including five on the offensive end, and point guards Charlie Ward (seven assists) and Chris Childs (a clinching late 3-pointer) combined to shut down Tim Hardaway, holding him to 15 points on 4-for-15 shooting to prevent a repeat of his 34-point performance in Game 1.

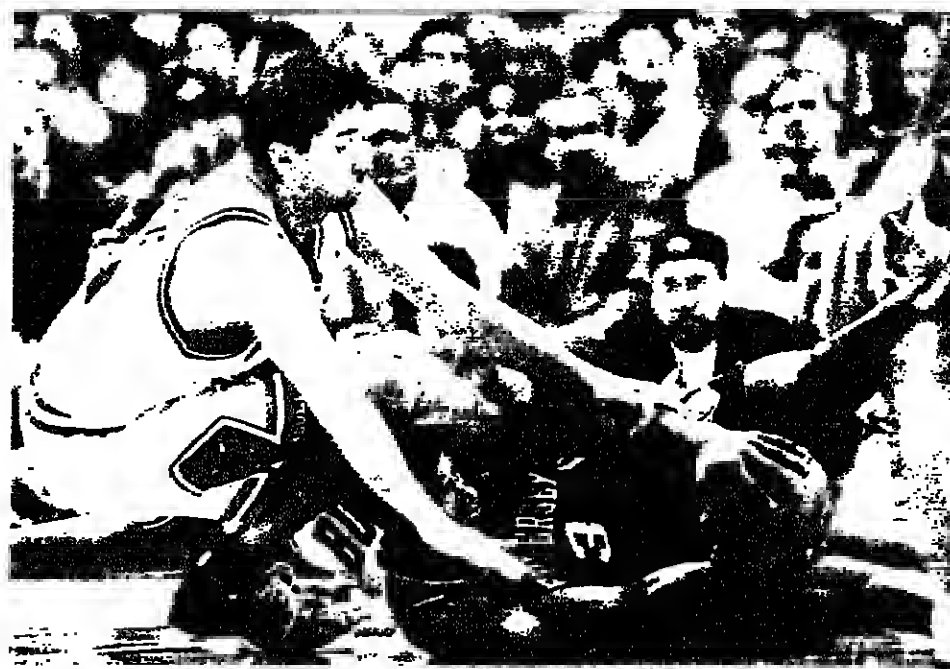
Game 3 will be Tuesday at Madison Square Garden, where the Heat's career record is 3-22.

• **Bulls 96, Nets 91:** In Chicago, it was another shaky finish for the Chicago Bulls, yet still another playoff victory over the New Jersey Nets.

Michael Jordan scored 32 points, Toni Kukoc added 19 and Dennis Rodman had 16 rebounds as the Bulls beat the sick and sore Nets to take a 2-0 lead in the first-round series.

The Bulls, who squandered a 14-point, fourth-quarter lead in the series opener, nearly blew a 21-point lead this time.

Sherman Douglas hit a 3-pointer to make it 94-91 late in the fourth, but Scottie Pippen then hit two



Chicago Bulls Toni Kukoc (L) scrambles for a loose ball with New Jersey Nets Kendall Gill during the fourth quarter of game two of the NBA Eastern Conference quarterfinals at the United Center. The Bulls defeated the Nets 96-91 in take a 2-0 lead in the series (Reuters photo)

free throws with 14 seconds left as the Bulls hung on.

• **Lakers 108, Trail Blazers 99:** In Inglewood, California, Eddie Jones, who had been accused of disappearing in the postseason, scored a playoff career-high 21 points as Los Angeles beat Portland.

The victory gave the Lakers a 2-0 lead in the best-of-5 first-round series, which resumes Tuesday night in Portland.

Rider said before the playoffs that he would get the better of Jones in their matchup, and he was correct in the opener, outscoring Jones 25-14 although Jones blocked six shots as the Lakers won a 104-102 decision.

In Game 2, Rider led the

Blazers with 24 points, but most of them came after the Lakers had taken command. At one point in the third quarter, Jones had outscored Rider 20-9.

Rick Fox scored 24 points, Shaquille O'Neal had 19 points and nine rebounds and Robert Horry added 15 points for the Lakers.

• **Timberwolves 98, SuperSonics 93:** In Seattle, the Minnesota Timberwolves finally won a playoff game — after nine years.

Led by Stephen Marbury's 25 points, the underdog Wolves took homecourt advantage away from the No. 2-seeded Seattle SuperSonics with a 98-93 victory Sunday night.

It gave the Wolves, who had been 0-4 in postseason games, a 1-1 split in the first two games of the best-of-5 Western Conference first-round series. Games 3 and 4 set for Tuesday and Thursday in Minneapolis.

The Wolves, 25-point losers here Friday night, got 21 points from Terry Porter, a surprise starter, and a playoff career-high 18 from Sam Mitchell, the last remaining member of the original Timberwolves. Kevin Garnett, the other half of Minnesota's dynamic 21-year-old duo, added 15.

Gary Payton scored 32 points for Seattle before fouling out with 13.8 seconds left.

Sampras leads ATP rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Leading ATP men's tennis rankings issued Monday:

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	3632 points
2. Petr Korda (Cze)	3499
3. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	3200
4. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3190
5. Greg Rusedski (Gbr)	3094
6. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	3027
7. Jonas Bjorkman (Swe)	2663
8. Alex Corretja (Spa)	2315
9. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	2285
10. Karol Kucera (Svk)	2141
11. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	2140
12. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	2103
13. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	2102
14. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	2048
15. Carlos Moya (Spa)	2036
16. Michael Chang (USA)	1976
17. Tim Henman (Gbr)	1847
18. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	1767
19. Sergi Bruguera (Spa)	1616
20. Andre Agassi (USA)	1589
21. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1574
22. Magnus Norman (Swe)	1484
23. Nicolas Pietrangeli (Ger)	1481
24. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	1473
25. Thomas Muster (Aut)	1395
26. Fabrice Santoro (Fra)	1357
27. Albert Costa (Spa)	1308
28. Marc Rosset (Svi)	1288
29. Jan Siemerink (Ned)	1261
30. Andrei Medvedev (Ukr)	1211

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IOC bans social drugs from 2000 Sydney Games

SYDNEY (AFP) — The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Monday banned social drugs such as marijuana, crack, heroin and ecstasy from the Sydney Olympics.

IOC director general Francois Carrard told a press conference the executive board had decided to put a provision in the Olympic charter outlining the fight against drugs.

The technicalities such as how and when testing will be carried out have yet to be finalised, he said.

None of the drugs are officially on the list of banned performance-enhancing substances the IOC distributes to international sports federations.

This confusion allowed Canadian snowboarder Ross Rebagliati to hang onto his gold medal at the Nagano Winter Games in February after he had tested positive for marijuana.

"We were taught a lesson by what happened in Nagano," Carrard said. IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch set up a working party after Nagano to find an iron clad rule to stop recreational drugs.

IOC vice-president Richard Pound, a Canadian, said it was important the Olympic movement take a stand against drugs.

"Olympic athletes ought to meet higher standards," he said. "They have to set an example."

The IOC are meeting in Sydney to inspect preparations for the 2000 Games as well as tighten up on rules. Samaranch has urged feuding Australian politicians to work together for a successful 2000 Games.

"Let the problems, if there are some problems, be for after the Games," he said in a veiled call for state and national politicians to patch up differences threatening to overshadow the IOC meetings.

Prime Minister John Howard has refused to deal with New South Wales (NSW) Olympics Minister Michael Knight, also president of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), accusing him of politicising the event.

The government has also threatened to withhold some 70 million (\$47 million) in funding unless the prime minister of the day can open the Games.

Another dispute is mounting in Australia over whether the Union Jack should be taken off the national flag on the uniforms of Australian athletes.

NSW Premier Bob Carr said Samaranch had indicated to him the IOC fully approved of Knight's dual role.

Carr said after meeting the IOC president that the message he received was that Sydney was on the right track in preparing for 2000 and the IOC was totally committed to Knight.

Despite Samaranch vowing not to discuss politics, Carr said it would be brought up when the IOC chief meets Howard and Sports Minister Andrew Thomson later this week.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH
Omar Sharif, Tammam Hirsch, Inc.

STUCK IN THE END

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ KQ72
♥ K5
♦ A88
♣ AK74

WEST
♠ 104
♥ QJ103
♦ QJ984
♣ 96

West led the queen of hearts, covered by the king and won by East's ace. The defender returned the two of hearts to West's ten, and the declarer exited with a trump.

Declarer was faced with the possibility of a loser in each minor. The only way to avoid that fate would be to trap one of the defenders in an endplay.

The first order of business was to check whether spades were 3-2. Declarer was happy to see both defenders follow to a second round.

The last trump was drawn, then the ace and king of both minor suits were cashed, everyone following. Since a club discard would not help, declarer, a low club was now led. That set up a club trick and luckily found East with nothing left but hearts. The forced heart return enabled declarer to discard a diamond from one hand while ruffing in the other, and the diamond loser had disappeared.

EAST
♠ 983
♥ A9862
♦ 105
♣ QJ5

SOUTH
♠ AJ65
♥ 74
♦ K72
♣ 10832

The bidding:
NOMER EAST SOUTH WEST
1♣ Pass Pass Pass
1♠ Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: Queen of ♥

Perhaps the simplest technique available to declarer in many contracts is the endplay. The ground-work consists of removing all of the enemy's safe exit cards, thereby forcing an advantageous return when you tuck in one of the defenders.

The auction was straightforward. With 10 points all prime and excellent.

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 - First floor master bedroom with dressing, safe box, bathroom & Jacuzzi/master bedroom/two bedrooms with one bathroom/kitchenette/family living area and spacious verandas.
 - Landscaped garden/swimming pool/terraces/B.B.Q./central antenna/covered parking for 4 cars and 24 cubic metre ground reservoir with automatic pump.

Total built area 700 sq. m. Total land area 1250 sq.m.
For enquiries & viewing contact phones
5527511/079-67122/079-50369



Al Quds Intermarkets wins a competition for the design of the new Jordan Television news logo

Jordan Television director Nasser Judeh announced at a press conference Saturday April 25 that Jordan Television will have a new logo designed by Al Quds Intermarkets firm. The logo will be used on Jordan Television 30th anniversary. Mr. Judeh said the new logo which was selected from among several designs by different firms and individuals specialising in advertising and designs will serve as the logo for all Jordan Television channels until the end of this year. He noted that the new logo could be adopted as a permanent Jordan Television logo in the future.

Intermarkets firm is one of the leading regional advertising agencies and specialising also in public relations throughout the Middle East and has branches in most of the Arab capitals. By winning the competition for Jordan Television logo, Intermarkets has thus added one more achievement to its own numerous accomplishments.

Egypt: Israel must make good on its promises to Palestinians

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — Signalling Egypt's impatience with Israel, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Tuesday that Egypt expects the Jewish state to respect the agreements it has signed with the Palestinians.

"It is time for precise words, promises to be respected and agreements to be enacted with transparency so that the world can monitor them," Mr. Musa told Egypt's Middle East News Agency.

His remarks came a day

before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to meet in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

After the breakfast meeting, which Mr. Musa will attend, the Egyptian foreign minister will travel to the Gaza Strip for a two-day visit to brief Palestinian officials on the outcome of the Netanyahu-Mubarak talks.

Mr. Musa also will chair a meeting of an Egyptian-Palestinian committee that is expected to conclude agree-

ments on increasing cooperation in trade, education, transport and health.

Egypt has long served as a mediator in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and has been upset over the deadlock in negotiations between the two sides.

Talks collapsed in March 1997 after Israel began construction of a new Jewish neighbourhood in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as the capital of their would-be state.

Israel also has failed to fol-

low through on earlier agreements with the Palestinians, including a promised pullback of troops in the West Bank.

U.S. Envoy Dennis Ross was in Israel for talks with Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on an American proposal to break the impasse.

It reportedly calls for Israel to withdraw from a further 13 per cent of West Bank territory over 12 weeks in exchange for new Palestinian security measures.

Israeli-U.S. aid-reduction agreement expected soon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel will strike an agreement soon with the United States on phasing out the \$1.2 billion in civilian aid the Jewish state receives annually from Washington, Israeli Finance Minister Yacov Neeman said Monday.

"The negotiations should bear fruit next week at the latest," Mr. Neeman said before his meeting Monday with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East Martin Indyk.

Israeli public radio said the agreement may be concluded in Washington next week. Talks on phasing out the civilian aid began in January.

Mr. Neeman hopes to gradually eliminate the civilian aid over 10 years while increasing U.S. military aid from \$1.8 billion to \$2.4 billion.

In addition, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would like to change the terms of the military aid so that 50 per cent of it may be used to purchase arms from Israeli military industries. Under the current arrangement, only 25 per cent may go for the purchase of arms from Israeli companies.

The Jerusalem Post newspaper said that Mr. Indyk was reported to be planning to use the aid negotiations to pressure

Mr. Netanyahu to move further along in the peace process, which has been stagnant for more than a year.

Total U.S. aid comes to about three per cent of Israel's gross domestic product now, while in 1986 it represented 10 per cent of GDP, according to the Bank of Israel, the Jewish state's central bank.

Israel has already drawn down \$50 million from its current aid packet for use by Jordan, but the Israelis and Americans have not yet decided whether the transfer of funds to Jordan would be a regular feature or a one-time gesture.

Jet fighter crashes over Gulf, pilot survives

DUBAI (AP) — A U.S. fighter jet crashed in Gulf waters Monday but the pilot ejected before the crash and was recovered by a U.S. helicopter, an official U.S. statement said.

"The aircraft, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 192, went down just after 1300 GMT. A helicopter from USS Independence recovered the pilot, who was uninjured," said a brief statement from the public affairs office of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command at 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain.

The statement said the cause of the accident was under investigation.

The plane was launched from the aircraft carrier USS Independence, which is in the Gulf to patrol the southern "no-fly zone" in Iraq — where Iraqi aircraft are not allowed to fly under a U.N. Security Council resolution.

The F-18, nicknamed the Hornet, is flown by both the Navy and Marine Corps. The F-18 can perform either air-to-air combat or ground attack missions. It is made by McDonnell Douglas.

Israeli pirate Jewish settler radio station to be legalised

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli ministers have decided in principle to legalise a pirate radio station operated for years with impunity by Jewish settlers in the West Bank, officials said Monday.

The decision was taken by a ministerial commission Sunday after Israeli Attorney General Eliyahu Rubinstein ruled that the Channel 7 radio station was operating illegally and should be shut down unless measures were taken to make its operations legal, they said.

Mr. Rubinstein's threat to shut the station sparked angry protests by far right parties in Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government, notably the pro-settlement National Religious Party which accounts for nine seats of the

government's 61-seat majority in the 120-member parliament.

It also threatened to derail Mr. Netanyahu's efforts to bring an extreme right party, Moledet, into government to strengthen his fragile coalition.

Following Sunday's ministerial decision, the Israeli defence and justice ministries began on Monday speeding up proceedings to issue a tender for a "regional radio station" authorised to broadcast to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, officials said.

Legal authorities had long sought to close Channel 7, which broadcasts from a ship anchored offshore and along with other pirate radios disrupts authorised radio communications, notably at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport.

But the Shin Bet internal security service warned that such action would spark violence by militant settlers.

Israeli press reports said Channel 7's management, located in the West Bank settlement of Beit Al, could try to oppose the government's move because it would restrict broadcasts to the occupied territories and require the station to pay licensing fees.

While the National Religious Party welcomed the government move, the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, which has 10 seats in parliament, threatened to quit Mr. Netanyahu's coalition unless pirate radios affiliated with the party are also legalised.

"We demand that our voice also be heard legally, or will quit the government," threatened Shas leader Ariel Deri.

Uproar over ultra-Orthodox's role in Israel's Memorial Day service

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Left-wing groups were up in arms Monday over plans to have an ultra-Orthodox cabinet minister represent the government at ceremonies this week for Israel's fallen soldiers even though most ultra-Orthodox Jews refuse to serve in the army.

Israeli Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush from the fundamentalist United Torah Judaism Party is scheduled to preside over one of a host of ceremonies marking Israel's annual Memorial Day which begins Tuesday night.

But left-wing groups and families of slain soldiers have angrily protested the choice.

"It is unacceptable that Porush, who leads a party whose constituents avoid their military obligations, represents the government at ceremonies remembering those who have fallen in battle," said Yossi Sarid, leader of the

leftist Meretz party.

Another left-wing group called A Free People called the decision to send Mr. Porush "cynical, disgusting and the epitome of insensitivity" to the feelings of bereaved relatives of the 20,330 soldiers killed in Israel's wars.

The most extreme ultra-Orthodox Jews refuse to admit the legitimacy of the Jewish state since their reading of the sacred texts is that such a state can only be created following the arrival of the Messiah.

Mr. Porush's party takes part in government for purely practical considerations concerning state funding for religious schools and institutions and social-welfare programmes for the ultra-Orthodox.

Most ultra-Orthodox men gain exemptions from Israel's otherwise mandatory military service by asserting that their life is dedicated to study of the Torah, or Bible.

Mr. Porush, however, did his military service and angrily lashed out at Mr. Sarid and other critics.

"It is chutzpah to demand that a deputy minister who himself served in the army not take part in a memorial service for fallen soldiers," he said.

Ultra-Orthodox leaders estimate that about 29,000 religious men and women currently enjoy exemptions from military service, about eight per cent of all Israelis of draftable age.

Other Israelis are obliged to enlist at the age of 18, men for three years of army service and women for 19 months.

The refusal of the ultra-Orthodox to serve in the army and their reliance on state welfare since most of their men do not work has contributed to hostility towards the community among Israel's secular majority.

Yilmaz backs away from early polls

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said Monday that neither his party nor his coalition partners now favour early legislative elections, backing away from an accord reached last week.

Mr. Yilmaz last Thursday yielded to pressure from Deniz Baykal, head of the Social Democratic Republican People's Party, and agreed to let a caretaker

government lead the country to early elections next March 28.

Under the agreement, an "election government" was to be formed in October to prepare the country for the polls. But the Anatolia news agency quoted Mr. Yilmaz as saying on Monday that his coalition government did not believe early elections would be good for the country.

"Our primary aim is to serve

the people and their needs," he said. "I think Mr. Baykal will have to reexamine the situation considering the reaction from the government parties and public opinion."

His back-peddalling came in the wake of dissent within his own Motherland Party and its coalition partners, the view being that a transition cabinet should be formed no more than two months before the elections.

Jet fighter crashes over Gulf, pilot survives

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Prince Walid Internet to Saudi Arabia

MANAMA (AFP) — Saudi businessman Prince Walid Ben Talal aims to introduce the Internet to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in partnership with a Kuwait-based satellite communication firm, the company announced here Monday.

ZakSat said it has struck a partnership with SilkNet, owned by the prince's Kingdom Holding Co., to provide satellite Internet services in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa.

The service will be launched on ZakSat, a delivery platform owned by ZakSat, and will include high-speed Internet, multimedia entertainment and interactive services, it said.

SilkNet is applying to license Zak products and services in Saudi Arabia, "and will be available in the market as soon as the Internet is legalised by the authorities in Saudi Arabia," said SilkNet chairman Faisal Izzuddin Yashar.

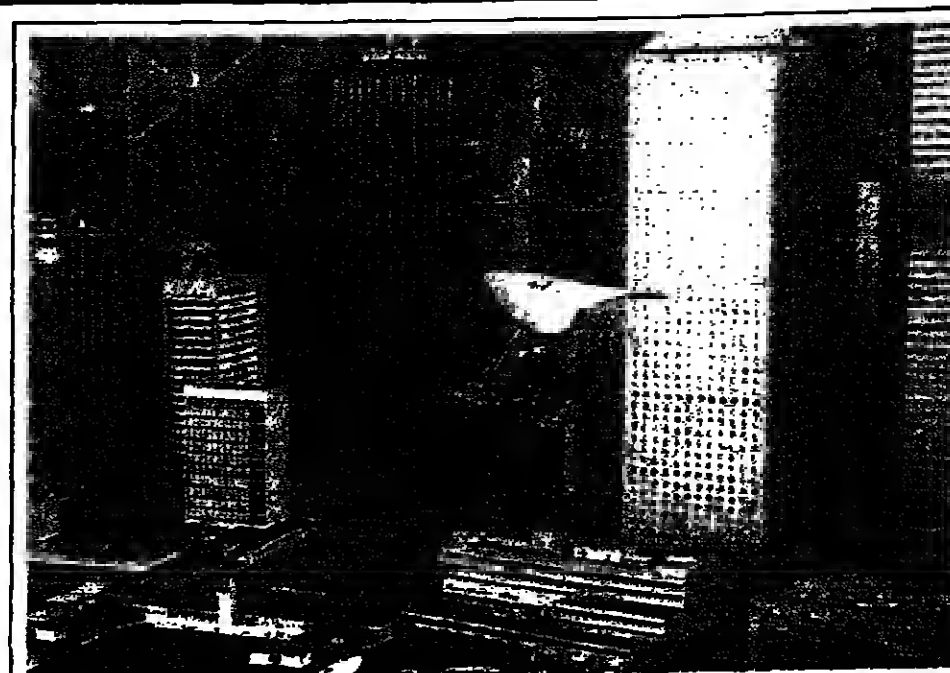
"Efforts are ongoing to provide the best of modern technology, while ensuring that this does not conflict with the traditions and culture of the region," he said.

Apart from Saudi Arabia, other Gulf Arab states like the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have Internet but access to pornographic sites is blocked.

Prince Walid said that the partnership with ZakSat was "in line with our latest portfolio additions in media, telecommunications and information technology."

Earlier this month, the billion-dollar prince invested \$200 million in a U.S.-based satellite communications project.

Using 388 satellites, Teledesic aims by 2000 to set up a worldwide network of access to telecommunications services, such as the Internet and video-conferencing.



EIGHT DAYS BEHIND SCHEDULE: British pilots Brian Milton, 55, and Keith Reynolds, 45, in a microflight fly over Hong Kong's commercial central district Sunday as part of their Around the World in 80 Days attempt, following the fictitious journey of Phileas Fogg. The duo's single-engine microflight aircraft is eight days behind schedule, after they were grounded in Hanoi for five days awaiting flight permission from Beijing and also losing three days in Al Qaysumah, Saudi Arabia, with engine problems (Reuters photo)

Briton held in Iran on spying charges freed, returns home

TEHRAN (AFP) — A British national detained in Iran on spying charges has been released and has already returned home, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi announced Monday.

The Jomhuri-Isami newspaper reported Sunday that a Briton identified as Robert Gavin had been arrested "recently" while filming army installations in a military zone in Iran's Kurdistan region.

Mr. Kharazi, speaking at a press conference, said the Briton, whom he did not identify, had been "detained while taking photographs and filming under cover as a journalist in a restricted zone in western Iran."

"This affair concerns the past — this individual has been released and is already in Britain," the Iranian foreign minister said.

A spokeswoman for the British Foreign Office in London said she was unable to confirm Mr. Kharazi's comments.

"We are aware of media

reports... We are trying to find out exactly what the situation is but we haven't managed to do that yet."

Mr. Kharazi's announcement of the release came after Jomhuri Isami, which is close to the headline wing of the Islamic Republic's government, said in Monday's edition that the Briton should be forced to stand trial.

"A trial and verdict in the case of the English spy could be a good way to start showing that here, no one kids around with clever Englishmen," the paper said.

It said Mr. Gavin had confessed to being an "important" member of the British foreign secret service MI6, and that he had entered the country on a tourist visa posing as a journalist for the BBC.

The paper said that during a one-week interrogation, Mr. Gavin "admitted being involved in espionage activities in Iran and several Arab countries."

Iran's northwestern

province of Kurdistan is a relatively unstable region bordering Iraq and Turkey, and is highly militarised and under close surveillance.

The report of a Briton's arrest came amid Iranian anger at British charges that it had attempted to buy British nuclear technology.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said last week that MI6 and the GCHQ communications monitoring agency had "tracked Iran's nuclear weapons programme, and have enabled us to disrupt Iranian attempts to procure British technology."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmud Mohammadi on Sunday described the charges as "baseless" and said they were an attempt to cover up a row in Britain over the delivery of a consignment of Georgian nuclear waste.

"Iran's position is clear — we are opposed to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction," said Mr. Mohammadi.

Cuba to compensate Canadian firm for nationalisation — report

TORONTO (AFP) — Havana has agreed to compensate a Canadian insurance company whose assets in Cuba were nationalised after the 1959 communist revolution, the Toronto Star said Sunday.

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, who was to leave Sunday for a two-day visit to Cuba, was to announce the deal in the Cuban capital Monday, the daily said.

Confederation Life, which is in the process of liquidation, will get \$8.4 million from the government of Cuban President Fidel Castro, the Star said, quoting Canadian officials.

The agreement, the result of 14 years of negotiations between the two governments, will be one of the highlights of Mr. Chretien's visit, which has drawn disapproval from Washington.

The United States' 36-year trade embargo on the communist-led island nation was tightened with the 1996 Helms-Burton Law punishing non-U.S. companies doing business with Cuba.

The Confederation Life deal is "a lesson to the Americans about what they ought to be doing instead of passing the Helms-Burton Law and placing an embargo on Cuba," the daily quoted a Canadian official as saying. "They should be down there working out a deal."

Four other Canadian insurance firms — Sun Life, Crown Life, Manulife and Imperial Life — are seeking compensation for assets seized after the revolution which overthrew U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

These four firms agreed to let Confederation Life make a separate deal in order to pay quickly its creditors.

U.S. claims against Cuba total \$6 billion — the same amount Havana says its economy has lost because of the U.S. embargo.

Yeltsin sacked govt to preempt no-confidence vote — aide

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin sacked the government last month to preempt a no-confidence vote which parliament was preparing, a top Yeltsin aide said Monday.

Alexander Kotenkov, Mr. Yeltsin's special representative to the State Duma, told a press conference that Mr. Yeltsin dismissed the government of Viktor Chernomyrdin to avoid a costly political stand-off which such a move would have triggered.

"Political crisis was growing in the Duma which was preparing a censure motion against the government," Mr. Kotenkov said in the first admission by a Kremlin official of a deeper political reason for the March 23 government shake-up.

"This time the motion had a chance of passing and plunging the country into a political crisis of seven to eight months," Mr. Kotenkov said.

"The president decided to avoid" such a scenario, Mr. Kotenkov said. "The dismissal

of the government resulted in a crisis of five weeks, a far lesser cost."

A month-long standoff between the Russian president and parliament over Mr. Yeltsin's choice for prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, climaxed on Friday when the young technocrat comfortably won confirmation in his post from Duma deputies at the third and last vote.

Deputies backed the candidate primarily to avoid dissolution of the Duma which a third "no" vote would have entailed.

Mr. Kotenkov said it was still possible that the new government, due to be finalised this week, would face the same censure motion later this year.

"The nearer we get to legislative elections (due in 1999), the more the temperature rises in the Duma," he said.

Lebed poised for governor post and political comeback

KRASNOYARSK (AFP) — Russia's would-be president Alexander Lebed completed the first stage in a political comeback, winning first-round gubernatorial elections in this vast Siberian region, results and analysts indicated Monday. With 98 per cent of the vote counted from Sunday's election in the Krasnoyarsk region, Mr. Lebed, 48, had 45.1 per cent of ballots against 35.4 per cent for the outgoing governor Valery Zubov. Interfax news agency reported. Turnout was put at a record 61.25 per cent, but as no candidate secured 50 per cent of the vote, Mr. Lebed and Mr. Zubov will face each other in a run-off vote pencilled in for May 17. Analysts said Mr. Lebed's 10-point victory would set him up for a handsome victory in a second-round vote, and added that the governor platform would enable him to return to the forefront of Russian politics and pose a direct threat to the Kremlin.



Kubrick fires Jason Leigh

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Stanley Kubrick has finally lost patience with Jason Leigh, replacing him with a Swedish actress for final shooting of his "Eyes Wide Shut" thriller.

According to Sweden's TT news agency, he has asked Marie Richardson to take Leigh's role because the American actress was busy working on another project in Canada. Earlier this month, the French weekly "Le film francais" said Kubrick had ordered Leigh to re-shoot all her scenes because he was so unhappy with her performance first time round.

Godzilla is back

TOKYO (AFP) — Godzilla is back. The big bad monster has returned to strike fear in New York, crushing everything in its path. French actor Jean Reno, who has a starring role in the movie "Godzilla" by Roland Emmerich, director of "Independence Day," presented a sneak preview of the film to a Japanese audience here. "It is a gigantic film," said Reno as a few reels of film, complete with high-tech special effects and computer imagery, were shown — with no images of the monster. The new digital Godzilla is such a jealously-guarded secret that only his paws have been revealed in leaflets advertising the movie.

Sheen and Fletcher to star in crime thriller

ROCHESTER, (AP) — Martin Sheen and Academy Award winner Louise Fletcher are heading to update New York to star in a crime thriller capitalising on the Rochester area's typically gloomy overcast skies. "In all honesty, I came here for the clouds," said Robert Manganiello, writer and director of "Seeing in the Dark." The independently produced movie is about a clairvoyant who falls in love with a crime scene photographer. The couple then become entwined in a murder committed by a pathological killer. Filming will be done over six weeks in May and June.

One thing is caring about the poor, acting on it is another

KANSAS CITY (AP) — Concern for the poor is one thing, acting on that concern is something much more. Just ask former President George Bush. "Volunteers take the next step," the former president said. "Not only do they care; they will roll up their sleeves and do something about it." Speaking at Kansas City's Summit and Youth Festival, he said: "Each of us who has done well in life has an obligation to reach out a hand and give back." The event was inspired by America's promise, an initiative which calls on Americans to give their time to improve the lives of at least two million of the nation's 15 million poor children by 2001.

Newton-John joins charity race

ROYAL OAK (AP) — Breast cancer survivor Olivia Newton-John joined thousands at the Detroit area's Race for the Cure benefit aimed at raising research money to combat the often-fatal illness. "It's very close to my heart," Newton-John told the 21,200 people taking part in the event at the Detroit Zoo. The pop singer underwent a mastectomy in 1992. The event consisted of a 5,000 m run-walk for women, family and friends; a 5,000 m men's run; and a 1.6 km Fun Walk.

Kingdom observes K of constitution

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Prime Minister issued a statement announcing the observance of the constitution by the King and the government.

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King v

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AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein set to issue a statement today at the invitation of the Jordanian President Zaki Al-Absi.

The statement said that the King reflects the strong brotherly relations between Jordan and Tunisia and part of the efforts aimed to further bilateral inter-Arab relations.

On Tuesday, King Hussein and the accompanying delegation visited a Danish military airbase and listened to a briefing by the base commander. The King watched military exercises and airshows performed by airbase pilots.

Also Tuesday, King Hussein Queen Noor and His Royal Highness Prince Ali

Musa predicts possibility of

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said here Tuesday he expects upcoming London talks to fail in reviving the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Mr. Musa, who came to Gaza City after attending talks in Cairo between Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said it was "probable" the London talks would fail.

He also raised the possibility of an "immediate" Arab summit if the talks fail in London on May 4 between U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

"Let us wait for the London meeting. If they produce nothing, we must bear the day. I do not rule out an immediate Arab summit, especially if we reach a stage of crisis," Mr. Musa said Palestinian Television.

While Ross tells PNA it v

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian leaders said Monday they have won assurances from U.S. officials that Washington's proposal for an Israeli troop withdrawal from 15 per cent of the West Bank will not be rolled down despite Jewish settler leaders' complaints.

The proposal was made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the event of such a withdrawal, 10 settlements would become isolated enclaves in Palestinian-run territory, said a spokeswoman.

Despite a flurry of diplomatic activity, U.S. mediation is making no progress on the fourth day of his mission Tuesday.

Mr. Ross faces a May 4 deadline when U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expects clear answers from Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian